

CANCER AT CONCORDIA

An examination of how the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and what were the subsequent effects.

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PREFACE

On the morning of February 19, 1974 an event happened at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis which not only was catastrophic for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and American Lutheranism, but also for American church history in general. On that winter morning, the vast majority of the faculty and students at Concordia Seminary staged a "walkout" to protest, among other things, the suspension of the seminary president, Dr. John Tietjen, as well as other actions of the seminary's board of control. This event, "the holy hike," as some have called it, received maximum media attention, from local church and public newspapers to the nightly network news. How could such a melodramatic and incredible event happen at a seminary where conservative confessional Lutheranism was not only the norm but also the battle cry for over a century, since its very founding?

The answer is both simple and complex. It is simple because one of the primary, if not the sole reason, why the faculty majority and most of the students walked out and off Concordia Seminary's campus that morning in February, was because they did not accept the historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation. It is complex because the primary reason for the foundation of "Seminex" became obscured in various ecclesiastical power plays between, on the one side, J. A. O. Preus, president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Concordia Seminary board of control, and on the other side, seminary president John Tietjen and the majority of the St. Louis faculty members.

The historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation had been the sole method employed in interpreting the Bible in the Lutheran Church-

Missouri Synod until somewhere in the 1940's. It was then in the 1940's and the early 1950's that a "new" method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the LCMS. This was the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation. This method has as an underlying premise this presupposition: The Bible is not divinely inspired or inerrant but it is a product by a variety of authors of a religious community over a period of millenia. The question then is this: "How and why did an orthodox Lutheran seminary such as Concordia, St. Louis begin teaching the historical-critical method? This research monograph will conduct an investigation of how the historical-critical of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and what were its subsequent effects. This investigation will center its attention on the beginning of the liberal movement in the Missouri Synod dating back to the 1930's. The two aspects of the liberal movement within Missouri, the counter-confessional attack and the counter-Biblical attack will then be studied in relation to how they affected the instruction at St. Louis.¹ Finally by examining the contemporary writings of an increasing liberal faculty at St. Louis, it will be demonstrated convincingly how the historical-critical method not only infiltrated nearly all of the St. Louis faculty, but also had an ominous effect on a sizable portion of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Unique to this monograph will be the analogy employed to describe the historical-critical method and how it was first introduced and then spread at Concordia, St. Louis. The historical-critical method will be described and compared to a malignant growth, a cancer, that has infiltrated a healthy body. Like cancer, the historical-critical method did not attack and infect all of Concordia, St. Louis and the Missouri Synod at once. It began in minute

segment of the Missouri Synod as does most cancer which attacks the human body. But like nearly all types of cancer, the historical-critical method, so quietly introduced to the Missouri Synod at its St. Louis seminary, did not stay in one place. The teachings and influence of the historical-critical method left the faculty discussion papers and class lecture notes and influenced and changed the method of Biblical interpretation among nearly the entire faculty at St. Louis and most of their students. Like cancer, when, as it spreads, begins to negatively infect other parts of the body, the historical-critical method did not just stay in one place by changing and altering the method of Biblical interpretation at St. Louis. The new method began to change doctrines, to "reinterpret" them so that they would be more applicable to modern man and the challenges that he encounters. Added to this, the historical-critical method opened the door for an active ecumenical movement within the Missouri Synod, for such an "enlighten" method of Biblical interpretation easily explained away all the Scriptural barriers to unionism as now irrelevant to today's American church scene. In short, by the early 1970's, the historical-critical method, begun at St. Louis, had infected nearly every major institution and program of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The writer of these lines hopes to convey to the reader by and through this monograph, that the historical-critical method, in whatever church body it infects, if it is allowed to run its natural course, will ultimately cause that church denomination to cease to exist as a Christian church body.

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Mequon, Wisconsin.

Good Friday, 1986.

CHAPTER I

A HEALTHY PATIENT WITH SOME BAD HABITS

It is highly debatable when and where Missouri's troubles began with the historical-critical method. In the Abiding Word, an anthology of doctrinal essays written in commemoration of the centennial of the LCMS, articles on topics such as the "The Clearness and Sufficiency of Scripture," "The Proper Use of the Bible," "Holy Scripture the Word of God," and "Bible Interpretation," contain no evidences of an epousal to any aspects of the historical-critical method.¹ Thus it can be said that for at least a century, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, officially subscribed to the historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation.

Perhaps the best and most productive way to address the question: "How was it possible for the historical-critical method to be taught at Concordia, St. Louis," is to first examine the Missouri Synod's Weltanschauung. As with Gemütlichkeit and Anfechtung, Weltanschauung does not have an exact English equivalent. Philosophy of life, ideology, or one's world outlook are near equivalents.

If one understands the Missouri Synod's Weltanschauung, or world outlook, one can more easily understand how the historical-critical method entered the seminary training at St. Louis. From almost its founding, there have been individuals in the Missouri Synod who have been concerned with image, with public relations, with proving the Missouri Synod is indeed

scholarly compared with other Lutheran synods and the American church scene in general. Granted, during the infant years of the Missouri Synod, Walther Sihler, Wyneken and many other Missouri Synod leaders had little time to be concerned with putting their best efforts into public relations. Their primary concern was the establishment of a firm confessional Lutheran synod and urgent mission work among the German immigrants who were streaming in groves to the shores of America in search of a better way of life. But as Missouri grew and grew and as the synod became more "established" on the American church scene, there were those in the Missouri Synod who took steps to make their synod look more scholarly, prominent, and impressive to those within Lutheranism and outside of it. A case in point is the granting of honorary doctorate degrees. Dr. C. F. W. Walther, who put an uncompromising stand for strict confessional Lutheranism above anything else, set the stage for this when he accepted an honorary doctor of divinity degree from the Ohio Synod seminary in Columbus, Ohio.² Walther certainly is not to be faulted for this. If any American Lutheran theologian deserved the title doctor, it would be C. F. W. Walther. Professor August Pieper wrote in his "Reminiscences" that Walther told his students that he had accepted the degree because the Ohio Synod at the time showed an interest to amalgamate with the Missouri Synod. Pieper: "Since he did not want to offend them, he decided to accept the title from them. But he warned us not to seek honors such as a title from men. It was common practice among Lutherans in the East to pass out such titles to professors and outstanding preachers to impress other synods and the public in general."³

Unfortunately later generations of Missouri Synod pastors did take Walther's admonition to heart. Concordia, St. Louis itself began granting honorary doctor of divinity (D.D.) degrees in June of 1903.⁴ August Pieper provides an interesting antedote illustrating how obsessed some Missourians had become about doctor titles and public recognition. This event happened in the mid 1940's: "Not too long ago when I visited a very fine and faithful neighboring pastor of the Missouri Synod, a group of seven or eight young Missouri preachers arrived. The local pastor introduced me as Professor August Pieper of the Wisconsin Synod Seminary at Thiensville. Their answer was: "And we are all docs!"⁵

When Concordia Seminary, St. Louis was founded, first in Perry County, Missouri, in October of 1839, the last thing the Saxon Lutherans had on their mind was advanced degrees for the men teaching at the infant seminary.⁶ Their concern was to put out well trained confessional Lutheran pastors who were to serve and establish congregations among the newly arrived immigrants. The early years of the St. Louis seminary were a time of conservation and confessionalism.⁷ Walther, Brohm, Ottomar Fuerbringer, and many others saw to that. As the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod died out, the new generation of Missouri professors retained their confessional Lutheranism. Carl Meyer writes about the successors of Walther:

Conserving and retaining the teachings of the early leaders of the Synod belonged to the tasks of the new generation . . . The conviction that conserving was the immediate task of the teaching force at Concordia Seminary pervaded the thinking of all the instructors . . . The personal influence of Pieper, Fuerbringer, Stoeckhardt, and Graebner had on the students of Concordia Seminary during the 1890's and the early 1900's was a pervasive one. The history of the Missouri Synod in first half of the 20th century testifies to the thorough indoctrination which the future pastors had received. It

testifies to the confessional loyalty and the desire to conserve the traditions of the first generation of Missouri's theology, the heritage of the 17th century orthodox theologians, and the treasure that had come from Martin Luther as it was understood by them. Academic and scholarly influences however were not great.⁸

The interest of some in the Missouri Synod concerning doctorate degrees soon changed the fact that during time period: "Academic and scholarly influences however were not great."⁹

Beginning in the early 1920's three men, Paul E. Kretzmann, Walter A. Maier, and John T. Mueller earned doctorates at secular universities or non-Lutheran seminaries, while teaching at St. Louis.¹⁰ Walter A. Maier, who was to become one of the most famous Missouri Synod Lutherans who ever lived as the speaker of "The Lutheran Hour," actually began his graduate work in Hebrew and Semitics studies already in the fall of 1916.¹¹ His son, Paul L. Maier, writes in his father's biography:

As graduate fellow, Walter studied at Harvard Divinity School from 1916 to 1918 and at Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences from 1918 to 1920 . . . (he) received his Master of Arts degree in 1920, having completed also most his residence requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy as well as write the first draft of his doctoral dissertation.¹²

The way that Paul L. Maier describes his father's reception at Concordia, St. Louis after earning his Ph.D. in Semitics from Harvard certainly illustrates that the Weltanschauung of the Missouri Synod now had developed quite an appreciation for earned doctorates:

Seminary President Franz Pieper embraced him cordially, as did his successor, Dr. L. Fuerbringer. Neighboring Professor Graebner congratulated him in Latin and Professor Arndt in Greek . . . Although final exams were lurking at the end of the week, the faculty and student body scheduled an academic celebration in Professor Maier's honor at the seminary auditorium. It was a jubilant affair, with speeches from the president of the Concordia student association, the faculty, and the city clergy.¹³

About the same time, Paul E. Kretzmann earned a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and John T. Mueller earned a doctorate from Xenia Theological Seminary, then in St. Louis.¹⁴ Clearly the movement toward earned doctorates for St. Louis professors was beginning to gain momentum. This can be illustrated by the seminary's board of control reason for granting Walter A. Maier a leave of absence to complete his doctorate:

" . . . in the opinion of the Board the professor's studies will redound to the welfare of Concordia, and through the acquisition of the doctorate the cause of our seminary will be promoted in its relationships to circles without our church."¹⁵ Little did the members of the board of control know then that their newly conceived policy concerning graduate work would someday contribute to the near destruction, if not complete destruction of their synod as an orthodox Lutheran church body.

Not everyone in the Missouri Synod applauded the "novel" practice of St. Louis seminary professors attending secular universities to advance their education and scholarship. But those who did soon became the proverbial "voices in the wilderness." One such man was Professor Martin Graebner of Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.¹⁶ Graebner was the younger brother of Theodore Graebner, a professor at St. Louis, and a son of August Graebner, who had been a professor at both the St. Louis seminary and the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Milwaukee. In the opinion of the writer of this monograph, what Martin Graebner wrote concerning the dangers of graduate work at secular universities in 1927 is an incredible example of prophetic vision and insight.

In response to Kretzmann and Mueller earning their doctorates, Martin Graebner wrote his brother Theodore that he had sent:

" . . . a very strong letter to Pfotenhauer concerning these men (Kretzmann and Mueller) and their ungodly degrees, setting forth why I consider these professors no longer useful to the Church. Both should at once resign or at the very least, return their titles to the heretics who conferred them, and make a public apology. Your faculty need not say another word about the Greuel der falscher Lehre (abomination of false doctrine), as long as you have men in your midst who must go to the heretics and study theology under them . . . Decay has set forth in at the top . . . It is the first breach in the great Lutheran bulwark."¹⁷

In an exchange of letters, Theodore Graebner agreed in principle to his brother's vehement warning. Although Theodore Graebner became a liberal during his latter years in life, what he wrote in 1927 is engaging to read in the light of the subsequent history of Concordia, St. Louis.

" . . . I confessed intense misgivings regarding the entire matter of university degrees or their equivalent. We are not only teachers in Concordia Seminary but are to be examples of efficient and consecrated workers in Christ's vineyard. Let the students once conceive the opinion that the university is the avenue to larger success in the church, and a number of things will follow: 1.) The more ambitious and gifted students will turn to the university. 2.) Of these some will lose their faith. 3.) Some will become warped in their religious views and will find the ministry or professorship in our Synod uncongenial and will drop out of active service. (Five or six cases on record now.) 4.) Some will absorb Modernism and instead of dropping out will remain with us. 5.) Working from within, such unfaithful professors or ministers will first of all destroy the personal standing, if possible, of those who oppose them. They will do this by belittling (sic) their scholarship, taking advantage of their faults, and otherwise ruining their influence. 6.) They will certainly in the end gather disciples about them and thus make Modernism an issue also in the Missouri Synod."¹⁸

Martin Graebner responded to his brother's letter by writing:

I shall also write to Kretzmann. What he says in his defense is also bosh. He quotes Matt. 18, which has no application to a public scandal. It is foolish to say that his teachers are Missourians. The true Missourian will sever

his connection with those who occupy the wrong position. The very fact that he calls these men Missourians shows how far he has already gone. That he wishes to prove to Merger people that 'Missourians are not without brains' is again nonsense. All it proves is, that Kretzmann has brains, and if he took his degree to show them that he has brains I see no reason to doubt his word. No, brother, let us get back to simplicity.¹⁹

Martin Graebner in the same day wrote to Paul E. Kretzmann:

I regard the action of you and Prof. Mueller as the beginning of the end of our orthodoxy. When the future church historian will trace the downfall of Missouri Lutheranism he will point to you two. You are breaking down the dividing line between truth and error. It is not possible for you consistently to tell your students, that all false doctrine is an abomination before the Lord, a thing they should avoid even to the extent of never attending a Sectarian church service. Our young men will get the impression, that the St. Louis Seminary is all right (sic) in its way, but that for real efficiency one must attend other schools of theology. Even now many of our young ministers are gathering much of their sermon material from other sources than our own, and the St. Louis faculty at this time has no more important work than to combat this tendency by precept and example.

Was Martin Graebner overreacting a bit to Kretzmann's and Mueller's degrees? Perhaps. But it cannot be overlooked that the writer of this research paper is fulfilling what Graebner so impassionedly warned against nearly sixty years ago, that "when the future church historian will trace the downfall of Missouri Lutheranism he will point to you two," or more precisely, to Mueller's and Kretzmann's desire for doctorate degrees, to prove that "Missourians are not without brains."²¹ The prediction: "Our young men will get the impression, that the St. Louis Seminary is all right (sic) in its ways, but that for real efficiency one must attend other schools of theology," was fulfilled to the letter when St. Louis began its drive for accreditation in the 1950's.²² Soon St. Louis was no longer the terminal point for theological training for "serious" scholars.

The terminal point for "real" theological scholarship became Union Theological Seminary, New York, the University of Chicago, and Harvard University, institutions where the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation reigned and reigned alone. What narrow-minded Martin Graebner foretold about his alma mater in his letters of 1927 could not have come more true in his most horrifying nightmares. Fortunately for Martin Graebner, he was dead long before it happened.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis during the 1920's was a healthy patient with some bad habits for another reason besides its professors attending secular universities. Already during the 1920's, there were Missourians, particularly out in the East and in the English District, who longed for closer ties with Lutheran synods outside of the Synodical Conference. On a synodical level, between 1918-1920 there were six official meetings between representatives of Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, Wisconsin, and the Missouri Synods.²³ From these meetings the Chicago Theses were drawn up. These theses were "a set of articles on union, covering all the points at issue among those bodies for seventy years."²⁴ These theses were drawn up and adopted by the various representatives in 1925. The Chicago Theses were adopted by the Wisconsin Synod at its convention in 1929, but the Missouri Synod convention in 1929 rejected them. The next year, 1930, the Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio Synods merged to form the old American Lutheran Church.²⁵ For a time the Missourians who favored closer relations with these Lutheran synods had suffered a setback.

Chapter I of "Cancer at Concordia" closes on a high note. In 1932, the Missouri Synod convention adopted the Brief Statement, a short Scriptural statement of the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. Although the Brief

Statement was the work of a committee, it was largely a product of the pen of Dr. Franz Pieper, former president of the Missouri Synod and president of the St. Louis seminary.²⁶ The death of this great Missouri theologian, second only to Walther himself, in June of 1931, and the adoption of the Brief Statement in 1932 can be seen as the high water mark of orthodoxy in the Missouri Synod and at the St. Louis seminary.²⁷ Carl Meyer writes:

The culmination of the period (of conservation) probably came with the adoption of A Brief Statement in 1932 . . . Largely the product of Pieper's pen, it summed up the conservative confessionalism of the Missouri Synod and the stand of the St. Louis faculty . . . The action of the 1929 convention in rejecting the Chicago Theses, the adoption of A Brief Statement in 1932, the death of Franz Pieper in 1931, and the retirement of the synodical President, F. Pfotenhauer in 1935, marked the end of an era for the Missouri Synod, which may conveniently be dated as coming to a close in 1932.²⁸

There were probably few in the Missouri Synod who ever thought in 1932 that within a generation there would be professors teaching at St. Louis who would eventually deny major tenets of the Christian faith. But the seeds of this apostasy had already been planted.

CHAPTER II

THE PATIENT IS EXPOSED TO CARCINOGENS

Chapter I of "Cancer at Concordia" began with the Saxons founding the St. Louis seminary in 1839. Chapter II now begins nearly one hundred years later in a smoke filled office in New York city. The year is 1930. The Missouri Synod is now an "established" church body in the United States. Its founding fathers Walther, Sihler, and Wynken are now long dead. Two new generations have been born. A movement is now begun to move the Missouri Synod forward, away from "theological stagnation," to a more "progressive" theological position. Professor Kurt Marquart of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana writes in his book Anatomy of an Explosion:

An insight into the origins and motives of this church-political manipulation of the Synod was given by another "insider," a prominent St. Louis seminary scholar (now at "Seminex"), who stated in a graduate class in July 1968

. . . that the "progressive" movement got started in a smoke-filled pastor's office in New York city in 1930, when 3 LCMS pastors . . . decided, after Synod had turned down the Chicago Theses and had authorized the drafting of the Brief Statement, that they would start a movement to 'change Synod.' Their goals were to prepare the LCMS for outreach into America by use of English (vs. German), and by moving Synod toward a more open doctrinal stance. To attain these goals they urged the election of conservative leaders (e.g. Behnken) who would listen to their suggestions of names for seminary presidents professors . . . and other officials. (The professor) said he joined that growing underground movement in 1940.'

This movement, begun in 1930 or thereabouts, was the beginning of liberalism within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The liberal movement began as Marquart describes it, with "a counter-confessional (ecumenical) attack" on the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod.² In short, this was

a movement within Missouri to unite with non-Synodical Conference Lutherans by quietly moving away from the Synodical Conference position on the doctrine of church fellowship. Later on, the counter-confessional or ecumenical arm of the liberal movement within Missouri created another reticent movement, the counter-Biblical attack, or the stealthy infiltration of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation, first introduced at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.³ This arm of the liberal movement within Missouri, viewed in retrospect, was far more sinister than the ecumenical movement. For the ecumenical movement by the liberals in Missouri was done for the most part in the open, Missourians began to participate in joint prayer and well publicized worship services with other non-Synodical Conference Lutherans. Fellowship talks once again began in 1935 with the old ALC.

The counter-Biblical movement, however, was done at first behind closed doors, in the classrooms at the St. Louis seminary. And what was worse, when the St. Louis faculty began facing charges of having an aberrant method of Biblical interpretation, it continued to insist (with some seemingly convincing evidence and documentation) that nothing at all had changed, particularly the Missouri Synod's doctrinal position.

Chapter II, "The Patient is Exposed to Carcinogens," is so named because during the 1930's the St. Louis seminary began to be increasingly exposed to progressive movements that caused a cancerous growth, theologically, which resulted in the erosion of the orthodox doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. Like carcinogens, which are substances which produce cancer, the progressive movements within the LCMS caused a cancer to begin

growing at the St. Louis seminary, the historical-critical method.

Much ink has been expended on the counter-confessional movement, unionism, and the resulting break up of the Synodical Conference. This monograph will only focus on how Missouri's ecumenical movement contributed to and fathered the counter-Biblical attack in the LCMS, or more precisely, how the union efforts of the Missouri Synod, beginning in the 1930's contributed to introducing the historical-critical method to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis.

As stated before, the year 1932 found the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States at "high tide" in regard to doctrinal unity and integrity. The year 1932 is the watershed date in the Missouri Synod. After 1932, Missouri's firm doctrinal position began to come apart. A change took place within Missouri concerning the doctrine of fellowship, as the counter-confessional movement, begun in 1930, began to make its presence felt. Professor Edward C. Fredrich of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary writes:

In the brief span of time between the appearance of its Brief Statement and the death of its leader, Franz Pieper, in 1931 and the adoption of its "1938 Resolutions" at the convention of that year, a startling change seems to have taken place in the Missouri Synod. Some aspects of the Missouri transformation during those years are commendable: the vigorous mission outreach into all areas of the United States, completed in the late 1930's when the last state, Arizona, was entered; healthy expansion in overseas mission endeavors; evangelism efforts; radio ministry. The list could be extended much farther.

There was, however, also a disturbing development in the transformation. The series of doctrinal discussions begun in the mid 1930's with representatives of the then newly born American Lutheran Church culminated in 1938 convention action of Missouri that caused Wisconsin to speak out in admonition and protest in 1939. That was the beginning of a continuing

fellowship endeavor on Wisconsin's part to maintain the Synodical Conference on its old foundations, an endeavor that was to last for over two decades until it had to be ended with the break in fellowship with Missouri in 1961 and the withdrawal from the Synodical Conference in 1963.⁴

This new period in Missouri Synod history was manifested in 1935.

Carl Meyer writes concerning the events of that year:

The new period in the history of the Missouri Synod was signalized by the election of John W. Behnken as President in 1935. A resolution on 'Relations with the American Lutheran Church and with the United Lutheran Church in America' expressed the willingness of Synod to confer with these bodies 'on problems of Lutheran union with a view toward effecting true unity on the basis of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.' The President was to appoint a committee of five to confer with representatives of these church bodies. William Arndt and Theodore Engelder were members of the Committee on Lutheran Church Union from the St. Louis faculty.⁵

The 1938 convention of the Missouri Synod in St. Louis acted upon the report of the five man committee who had been meeting with representatives from the ALC since 1935.⁶ The St. Louis convention passed the "1938 Resolutions." Of interest to the focus of this monograph is the fact that two members of the St. Louis faculty, Walter A. Maier and Ludwig Fuerbringer, were members of Committee 16 which secured passage of the 1938 Resolutions. Meyer: "The resolution did not establish church fellowship, but pointed toward it."⁷

The participation of some St. Louis faculty members in fellowship talks with the old ALC produced much consternation and dissention, both within the faculty and among some of the ministerium of the Missouri Synod. Already before these fellowship talks began in 1935, there were rumblings of dissention within the St. Louis faculty. Retired Wisconsin Synod pastor Rev. A. T. Kretzmann tells of a story during his seminary years (1929-1931)

at St. Louis when his uncle, Professor Paul E. Kretzmann came home deeply disturbed one evening. When his wife asked what was wrong, Professor Kretzmann told of the events of a faculty meeting held that afternoon. During the meeting Seminary president Franz Pieper announced after examining the faculty's printed classnotes that everyone of the professors at St. Louis was in some way deviating from the Word of God, with the exception of himself and Paul Kretzmann. (Theodore Graebner apparently became so angry at these accusations that he stormed out of the room!)⁸ It is interesting to note who were some of the men on the St. Louis faculty at this time: Theodore Graebner, John Fritz, J. T. Mueller, William Arndt, Walter A. Maier, W. Gustav Pollack, Theodore Engelder, and Theodore Laetsch.⁹

A letter dated February 19, 1940, from Paul E. Kretzmann to Rev. Paul Burgdorf is even more revealing. Professor Kretzmann's letter, written in 1940, already indicates a generation before the Seminex walkout, that the St. Louis faculty was no longer a single united theological voice:

It was my intention to write you at length on many points which require earnest discussion, but I can hardly trust myself to set down everything in writing. How would you feel, as an instructor in our CONCORDIA SEMINARY, if you had to be on the defensive on the doctrine of the Antichrist, on the length of a creation day, on evolutionism, on the sanctioning of the modern dance, and other doctrinal and practical questions, when students blandly inform you that other men in the faculty hold more advanced views? I formerly kept a list of the questions on which opinions in our faculty differ widely from the straightforward teaching of a generation ago, but the subject was too painful. I know that one of the men with whom you are in controversy is committed to compromise, expediency, Melancthonism, not from opposition to the truth, but simply because he is built that way and has not the ability to distinguish sharply or to insist upon the truth. The other man who you have in mind is brilliant, but very erratic to a very extreme degree, eager for the applause of the multitude, and implacable in his feeling against me for my

share in not having the theses of 1929 accepted in River Forest. These and other men may not be in the majority in the faculty, but they wield enough influence to swing the majority, as we have seen time and again. You may also have noticed that the president of Synod has not place me on any committee which dealt with questions of doctrine since 1929.

All these experiences have not, as I hope, embittered me. But they have caused me to withdraw from the scene of conflict more and more. Even today I am not sure whether I would have an appreciable number of pastors in Synod on my side if I should step into the open. I might find myself on the outside, looking in, one of these days.

A month before, the recipient of Dr. Kretzmann's letter, Rev. Paul Burgdorf, published the first edition of the Confessional Lutheran. This church paper was founded by concerned conservative Missourians in response to the acceptance of 1938 Resolutions regarding fellowship with the ALC. Burgdorf and his associates founded the paper "to make a contribution to the cause of Confessional Lutheranism and to Lutheran Confessionalism."¹⁰ "Acceptance of the St. Louis Article of 1938 must be rescinded" was the chief goal of the editors of the Confessional Lutheran.¹¹ Later it will be shown that as the ecumenical movement gained momentum within Missouri, the Confessional Lutheran began attacking members of the St. Louis faculty who participated in it.

One more event occurred in 1940 which is worthy of mention. Rev. Richard Caemmerer joined the faculty in the fall of 1940 to teach homiletics.¹² Known as an outstanding communicator, Caemmerer had been pastor of Mount Olive Lutheran Church in St. Louis before being called to the seminary.¹³ According to one of his students, Rev. Reinhold H. Goetjen of Messiah Lutheran Church in North Hollywood, California, Caemmerer taught his students a strange concept called "love theology," which at the very least was a confusion of law and gospel.¹⁴ Goetjen writes:

When this writer was a student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., (1939-1943) he received his first indoctrination on this new 'love' theology while studying under Dr. R. R. Caemmerer. This student at that time thought this new 'approach' was wonderful. He had great visions of how the new crop of students with this new 'love' weapon would 'conquer the world.' Dr. R. R. Caemmerer promised (taught) that if we just used enough 'love' we would be able to win anybody. In fact, if we did not win someone, then it would be our fault because we didn't use the right approach, we didn't show enough 'love.' At the time, it never occurred to this writer that Dr. Caemmerer was promising to make us greater missionaries than Christ Himself who by no means won everybody even though He was God and the embodiment of love. 'God is love.' Likewise, it never occurred this writer then that the only way to 'win' a hardened sinner by this method would be to compromise. For if the the hardened sinner resisted the Holy Ghost and refused to repent, he was not won for the Lord even though he may have been added to the church rolls. Is it any wonder that so many of Dr. Caemmerer's students ended up as great compromisers with the unconverted sinners in their parishes? Is it any wonder that they were not in favor of disciplining the heretics and errorists?¹⁵

Later Richard Caemmerer was to become one of the signers of the "Statement of the 44" and one of the faculty leaders in the formation of Seminex.

There were five St. Louis faculty members who were signers of the 1945 "Statement of the 44." They were Theodore Graebner, Richard R. Caemmerer, Paul M. Bretscher, W. Gustav Pollack, and William Arndt.¹⁶ These five men were the clearest indication yet that the counter-confessional or ecumenical movement had made strong inroads into the St. Louis faculty. Theodore Graebner especially became a leading advocate of the union movement within Missouri, authoring such documents as Historic Lutheran Position in Non-Fundamentals, Prayer Fellowship, and Toward Lutheran Union with Paul Kretzmann.¹⁷ Theodore Graebner and W. G. Pollack also advocated the ecumenical movement through their editorials in The Lutheran Witness.¹⁸

The "Statement of the 44" was issued the first week in September of 1945, one month after the dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan. While the two bombs dropped over Japan helped end World War II,

the Missouri Synod's own "atomic bomb," the "Statement" helped begin one.¹⁹

The "Statement" proved beyond all doubt to everyone in the Synodical Conference, liberal or conservative, that the liberal movement within the Missouri Synod was large and it was growing. The signing of the "Statement of the 44" also proved that at least some members of the St. Louis faculty were now part of that movement. Liberal Missourian Eldon Weisheit writes:

Many welcomed the "Statement" as evidence of a side of Missouri that they said always existed. They quoted Walther and Pieper on their side. Others deplored the "Statement" as a new teaching. They quoted Walther and Pieper on their side. One pastor claimed that each of the 12 theses contained false doctrines. The 44 signers, including five seminary professors, four district presidents, and a retired seminary president, were heroes to some and villains to others. Pastoral conferences and district conventions debated the issues . . . The "Statement of the 44" showed there were two views in the synod.²⁰

At this same time, members of the St. Louis faculty began to participate in ecumenical worship services. The Confessional Lutheran reported in June of 1945 in an article entitled: "We Must Watch Our Seminaries!":

'We must watch our seminaries!' that is timely advice-- Among the conditions of membership in the Missouri Synod the following is stipulated by its constitution: 'Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description.' (Article VI.) But consider some of the things that are happening today. 1) The Lutheran Witness of May 22, over a signature of 'G,' has brought a report of a joint meeting of faculties of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, the Theological Seminary of Columbus, Ohio (A. L. C.), and the Wartburg Seminary of Dubuque (A. L. C.), which was opened with a prayer by Dr. L. Sieck. This, despite the fact that the Missouri Synod in 1941 affirmed its position, and as its latest convention, in Saginaw, Michigan, in 1944, reaffirmed its position, stating that 'it be understood that no pulpit, altar, or prayer fellowship has been established between us and the American Lutheran Church; and until such fellowship has been officially declared by the synods concerned, no action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which ignores the fact that we are not yet united.' (Proceedings, Missouri Synod, 1944, p. 251)

2) St. Louis newspapers reported a V-E Day 'Inter-faith Service' in which Prof. Rich. Caemmerer of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, participated together with Catholic prelates, a Jewish rabbi, and pastors of various Reformed sects, one of the participating Catholic prelates opening the service with an invocation, others referred to, including Prof. Caemmerer, following with five-minute addresses, and the latter, substituting for a Missouri Synod pastor who withdrew on instruction by his conference, because of its religious character, closing the service with what was announced to be, and reported as being regarded as, a benediction.'

3) Churchill Tabernacle in Buffalo, New York, 'Buffalo's largest spiritual workshop,' publicly announcing its silver jubilee services, held from Palm Sunday to Easter, according to a copy of the announcement before us, announced these services as featuring 'seven great speakers' during the 'seven glorious days' of its celebration . . . In the first service, from 12 Noon to 3 P. M., in which Dr. Clinton H. Churchill of the Churchill Tabernacle was announced as 'presiding,' a Presbyterian pastor, a Free Methodist pastor, and Doctor Walter A. Maier of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, were announced as the speakers, the latter being again featured in the evening service, which was broadcast over Station WKBW.²¹

What is even more surprising about the great Walter A. Maier's participation in a blatant unionistic service was his reaction to criticism about it. He appeared to totally ignore it, as if the editors of the Confessional Lutheran were in the wrong and he was in the right. His son Paul L. Maier writes:

The opposition he encountered in his own Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was rare and exceptional, but it smarted, because the criticism came from home. If Maierian theology was 'traditional-Lutheranism expressed in an untraditional manner,' it was only natural that he, as one of his church's leading progressives, should come under attack by the ultra-orthodox. Synod's ultra-orthodox were a dwindling splinter group, but a very vocal one. While they approved the Lutheran Hour speaker's battle with Modernism, they also censured him for addressing non-Lutheran groups and praying with them! Interpreting this a 'religious unionism,' their heresy-hunting organ, The Confessional Lutheran, did Walter Maier the honor of attacking him. Naturally he made no reply, for he would not do battle with brethren of constricted mind.²²

Clearly the most famous spokesman of Missouri Synod Lutheranism had also been influenced by the union movement within his synod.

The counter-confessional movement of ecumenicalism was only one of carcinogens the St. Louis faculty exposed itself too. As the union movement gained momentum in the Missouri Synod, more and more St. Louis faculty members began earning doctorates. It has been mentioned previously about Mueller, Maier, and Kretzmann earning their degrees. Carl Meyer writes:

. . . a segment of the faculty was ready to move toward advanced training and earned degrees. Mueller, Kretzmann, and Maier in the 1920's were the forerunners of the men who earned degrees in the 1940's and later. Before 1941 Schick and Bretscher came to the faculty with doctor's degrees; Arndt and Caemmerer earned their degrees while members of the faculty. In the 20-year span between 1921 and 1941 16 men were called to the staff; only six of these had their degrees when called or earned them in service. Of the next 23 men called to the faculty with the rank of professor (all by the end of 1954), 13 had earned degrees or earned them in service.²³

It is interesting to note that three of the five St. Louis faculty members who signed the "Statement of the 44" had earned doctorates. Caemmerer earned his at Washington University and Bretscher and Arndt earned their Ph.D.'s at the University of Chicago.²⁴ Clearly the secular humanism these men were exposed to in the university classroom was beginning to erode their confessional Lutheran position. Their desire to unite with more "open minded" Lutherans than those of just of the Synodical Conference made them want to be on par with them in terms of scholarship. Hence, many professors at St. Louis began engaging in secular graduate work during the 1940's.

The push for more faculty graduate work at St. Louis, began in the late 1940's, greatly accelerated during Concordia Seminary's accreditation drive in the 1950's. The Book of Reports and Memorials for the Missouri Synod conventions of 1947 and 1950 reveal an ever increasing emphasis on

on graduate work. Consider the reasons given for developing the Graduate School at St. Louis, listed in the Report on Concordia Seminary, St. Louis to the centennial convention of 1947:

We have made steady progress in the development of our Graduate School. Our greatest difficulty is the shortage of manpower in our teaching staff, but only second to this is the lack of adequate classroom facilities, suitable living quarters for graduate students, and a sufficient number of attractive scholarships to make it possible for able and deserving men, either from the ranks of recent graduates or from the ministry and teaching profession, to pursue advanced theological studies. The world has learned to advance the cause of scholarship by providing the means to enable gifted and deserving men to devote their time to scholarly research.. We have arrived at a period in our Church when we must learn to do likewise. The time has come when the Church must give more serious thought to the development of this phase of its educational program. We have improved the pretheological training of our clergy, but have done very little toward the development of our theological training beyond the traditional three years. Other Lutheran bodies are beginning to feel the serious need of a strong graduate theological school in America because of the situation of the Church and Lutheran scholarship in Europe, and because even now many Lutheran scholars and theologians are doing their advanced theological work in Reformed or even highly modernistic theological schools. The effect of this on the future of the Church is inevitable. We have made a humble beginning in establishing a Graduate School, but much more must be done before our goal has been reached.²⁵

While it is commendable that the authors of this report raised a red flag for the fact that "many Lutheran scholars and theologians are doing their advanced theological research work in Reformed or even highly modernistic theological schools," their reason for developing the St. Louis graduate program was ominous to say the least.²⁶ "The world has learned to advance the cause of scholarship by providing the means to enable gifted and deserving men to devote their time to scholarly research. We have arrived at a period in our Church when we must learn to do likewise."²⁷

These two sentences reflect the Missouri Synod's Weltanschauung accurately, an emphasis to advance the cause of scholarship, along side the cause of advancing the Christian gospel.

The 1950 report on Concordia Seminary to the Missouri Synod convention in Milwaukee is even more revealing. The report states in no uncertain terms that one of the goals of the graduate school at St. Louis is "bringing our influence to bear on Lutheran and Protestant theology."²⁸ The report of the graduate school ends with a request for scholarships for promising young men to continue their studies for the doctorate:

Our Seminary ought to aim to exert a greater influence in the theological world today. In God's own providence the disturbed conditions of the world have helped to bring our Synod and Concordia Seminary to the attention of Lutheranism in the world. The Lutheran Hour and other factors have also contributed to make our Seminary known here in America. The time is, therefore, most propitious for us to take the initiative in bringing our influence to bear on Lutheran and Protestant theology. We have already begun to attract pastors and students from other denominations . . . Attractive scholarships should be provided to make it possible for our most promising young men to continue their studies for the doctorate.²⁹

Also in 1950, there were two memorials which concerned graduate work. One called for the founding of an "Institute For Postgraduate Study and Research" and the other called for an increased use of the graduate school at Concordia, St. Louis.³⁰ The latter proposal was offered by the president of the Lutheran Academy for Scholarship, Martin Scharlemann.³¹

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis was a healthy body after 1932, but only for a while. The St. Louis faculty began to expose themselves and their students to the counter-confessional movement within Missouri more and more during the late 1930's and early 1940's. As the same time,

a growing emphasis on scholarship for the sake of scholarship, scholarship as an end in itself, intellectualism if you will, was beginning to develop among many of the professors at St. Louis, as well as many Missourians in general. This scholastic and intellectual emphasis in seminary training caused many Missouri men to enroll in the St. Louis graduate school and in many secular university graduate programs. These events, occurring in the late 1940's and early 1950's set the stage for the infiltration of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation into the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The Weltanschauung of the Missouri Synod would now turn ugly. Cancer was about to strike Concordia.

CHAPTER III

A CANCER IS IMPLANTED IN THE PATIENT: CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS

The first two chapters of this monograph addressed the question concerning how Concordia, St. Louis and its faculty became ripe for the introduction of the historical-critical method. Now Chapter III will directly address the question when did the historical-critical method come to Concordia, St. Louis, and who was responsible for it.

In order to find the answer for the thesis of this research paper, fifteen men were either written to for information or interviewed personally. Five of these men are either seminary presidents or former seminary presidents. All of the men written were in a position to answer partially if not completely the question: "How was the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis?" The vast majority of these men eagerly responded with some very significant insights and information.

As previously mentioned, there is evidence of doctrinal aberrations within the St. Louis faculty at the beginnings of the 1930's. Certainly by the 1940's many pastors in the Missouri Synod began to view some members of the St. Louis faculty with suspicion. In the Reports and Memorials for the 1950 synod convention in Milwaukee, three memorials were presented which called for an investigation of the St. Louis faculty. According to Memorial 634:

WHEREAS, A communication, signed by 127 pastors of our Synod, was in 1946 addressed to the Board of Electors of the St. Louis Seminary, requesting an investigation of five professors of that Seminary;

WHEREAS, The then chairman of the Board of Electors, who was also the chairman of the St. Louis Board of Control at that time in a letter dated May 29, 1946, rejected the request . . .¹

Memorial 634 went on to state that a special committee of clergy and laymen be appointed to investigate all the facts and then publicly charge them with teaching false doctrine or publicly exonerate them.²

Several other requests were of a similar nature, two specifically mentioning the St. Louis faculty's questionable position on engagement, that it is not tantamount to marriage (May 24, 1949) and several concerning doctrinal aberrations on church fellowship.³ One other memorial, 636, simply stated:

Charges of a very serious nature (promulgating and adhering to false doctrine) have during the past years been publicly raised against certain members of the St. Louis Faculty by various members of Synod (individuals and conferences) . . .⁴

While these serious charges are nebulous, events soon happened at Concordia which indicated something far more serious was about to occur. In the fall of the year 1949, Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan was called to teach at St. Louis. Described variously as a "young intellectual" and as a "wunder-kind of the Missouri Synod," Pelikan brought to St. Louis his neo-orthodox ideas he learned while earning his doctorate at the University of Chicago.⁵ Now before his twenty-sixth birthday, Pelikan began to teach systematic theology at Concordia. In his book, From Luther to Kierkegaard, published in 1950, Pelikan concluded that today's Lutheranism necessitates a new philosophy. The philosophy or Weltanschauung of Lutheranism during the Age of

Orthodoxy was severely deficient according to Pelikan:

A philosophy for Lutheranism? The question naturally arises: What philosophy? Negatively speaking, it certainly dare not be the philosophy that was current in the Age of Orthodoxy. In spite of the religious and theological value of the doctrinal formulations of the seventeenth century, the philosophical framework of reference which shaped those formulations cannot be critically accepted.⁶

Rather Pelikan challenged Lutheranism to develop a new philosophy in the 20th century, using Soren Kierkegaard's existentialism as a basis: "The work of Kierkegaard is a beginning, but much more remains to be done, especially in the construction of a Lutheran philosophy."⁷ Some of what Pelikan expounds can be viewed in a favorable light, but his emphasis on calling for a modern Lutheran-Christian philosophy for the twentieth century was exactly the catalyze needed to usher in the historical-critical movement at Concordia, St. Louis. Afterall, what could be more beneficial in developing a modern Lutheran philosophy than a modern method of interpreting the Bible? Kurt Marquart writes:

Among the first public symptoms that the neo-Lutheran historical-critical contagion had reached the Missouri Synod was the publication in 1950, and by the Synod's own Concordia Publishing House, of From Luther to Kierkegaard, written by the young intellectual Jaroslav Pelikan. With supreme confidence in the prevailing winds of doctrine, the book announced that the Lutheran Church had been set on the wrong philosophical track already by Chemnitz and the Formula of Concord, that the German philosopher Immanuel Kant had destroyed the foundations of Lutheran Orthodoxy, and that Lutheranism now needed a new philosophy, namely that of Kierkegaard, to wit: 'Only that is true which is true for me.' Such glib 'trendiness' came now to dominate a new breed of Missouri Synod scholarship which stressed breadth rather than depth. Lutheranism's stately and venerable old doctrinal edifice was no longer seen from within, but only from the perspectives of its avowed enemies. Hence it was no longer understood. External, superficial neglect and dilapidation were mistaken for structural weakness and collapse. And so the rambling old mansion was condemned unsentimentally to be bulldozed in order to make way for some streamlined 'contemporary' abomination, à la Barth, Aulen, or Tillich.⁸

Pelikan did not start teaching at St. Louis until 1949. Nearly all of the evidence points to the fact that throughout the 1940's the historical-grammatical method was accepted and taught at St. Louis. Dr. Walter A. Maier was one of the historical-critical method's harshest critics. Professor John Jeske of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin reported in an interview on March 12, 1986 that during his year of study at St. Louis, from September of 1943 to May of 1944, he was not exposed to or taught any form of the historical-critical method.⁹ Some have maintained that the five St. Louis professors who signed the "Statement of the 44," since they no longer accepted the sedes doctrinae of the doctrine of fellowship by this statement, had to have been expousers of the historical-critical method. Although there may be a grain of truth to this, this view is really the result of a failure to differentiate between the two arms of the liberal movement with-Missouri, the counter-confessional movement and the counter-Biblical movement.

Professor Kurt Marquart in Anatomy of an Explosion states flatly that Missouri maintained its orthodox position on Scripture through the 1940's:

The Missouri Synod meanwhile presented its well-known solid front for inspiration-inerrancy throughout the thirties and forties. Even those who favored a softer line on fellowship, and especially towards the ALC, were quite unyielding on the matter of strict biblical authority. The 'Statement' of the 'Forty-Four' insisted in its second thesis on 'the great Lutheran principle of the inerrancy, certainty, and all-sufficiency of Holy Writ.' Dr. William Arndt, St. Louis Seminary Professor, co-translator of Bauer's great New Testament lexicon, and one of the original 'Forty-Four,' continued to write books and articles which not only defended verbal inspiration and inerrancy, but insisted that this matter was crucial to any proper doctrinal agreement among Lutherans.¹⁰

It has already been mentioned that the theologically liberal Jaroslav Pelikan began teaching at St. Louis in 1949. A year earlier, John Tietjen began his seminary training at St. Louis. In a letter dated March 18, 1986 Dr. Tietjen stated in response to the question whether Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were the first ones who brought in professors who taught the historical-critical method:

I shall be brief and direct in response to your letter. No; Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were not the first ones who brought in professors who taught the historical critical method." During my time as a student at Concordia Seminary (1948-1953), I learned the historical critical method in the classrooms of the now sainted William Arndt, Paul Bretscher, Martin Franzmann, and George Schick. That was before Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were in positions of leadership."

It is unclear from Dr. Tietjen's letter whether he meant that he learned about the historical-critical method from the professors he named or that he was actually taught to use it by these professors. Since Dr. Paul Bretscher later became a full-fledged historical critic later on, John Tietjen could have learned a mild form of it even in the late 1940's. Both Rev. A. T. Kretzmann and his uncle, Dr. Paul E. Kretzmann maintained that William Arndt, although brilliant, often vacillated in the classroom on pertinent doctrinal and exegetical points.¹² Concerning Martin Franzmann and George Schick, no evidence has come to light ever showing them to be historical critics, besides Dr. Tietjen's letter.

Dr. Ewald J. Otto, the chairman of the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis at the time of the formation of Seminex, and an editor of Affirm, was asked via a letter how the historical-critical method came to St. Louis. Dr. Otto responded congenially:

In 1973 I was told that the beginnings of the liberal theology at the Sem went back some 30 years or so. This would take you beyond Dr. Scharlemann and 1952 . . . How far back ahead of 1952 do the h-c beginnings go? Can they be pinned to one person? I doubt it. You have read Exodus from Concordia. Good. Now—if you don't have it—get Prof. Kurt Marquart's 170-page book, Anatomy of an Explosion. It deals with the doctrinal issues and goes back to European roots of liberalism, then to development in the U.S., and finally into the Missouri Synod. . . That book is a must for you and your church history paper.

One other bit of help: Dr. John Klotz of the Graduate School at our St. Louis Sem. He has an amazing memory and a historical bent of mind. Also, he's close to some of the retired profs who were there at the time of the walk-out. All of which is to say I'm taking the liberty of forwarding your letter to him and also a copy of this letter of mine. I'm sure he'll be of help with your specific question, namely, 'How the historical critical method was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary St. Louis.'

Given my ignorance of the background, I'll still be bold enough to say that I feel that your answer (thus far) as given in the second paragraph of your letter to me is far too simplistic. It was cooking way ahead of Scharlemann.¹³

Dr. John Klotz, director of the Graduate School at St. Louis, acted upon Dr. Otto's request and wrote:

There were concerns expressed over the theology of the faculty at Concordia Seminary beginning in 1945. At the 1950 convention a number of overtures (Memorials) referred to what was being taught at the St. Louis Seminary. In addition there were three specific memorials asking that the doctrinal position of members of the faculty and what was being taught at Concordia Seminary St. Louis be investigated by the Synod. As you know Dr. Scharlemann joined the faculty in September of 1952. It is clear that at least a mild form of historical criticism had begun some years before that time. The concerns did not begin only after he joined the faculty.¹⁴

Although there is nebulous evidence that the historical-critical method had quietly infiltrated the classrooms at Concordia already before 1950, the first solid evidence that there was indeed cancer at Concordia came in the early 1950's. Again Kurt Marquart lists Jaroslav Pelikan as possibly a contributing cause of this:

Pelikan served on the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis from 1949 to 1953. It may or may not be a coincidence that the student unrest over verbal inspiration came to a head in the 1953-54 school year.¹⁵

Herman Otten, editor of the weekly Christian News, began his studies at Concordia, St. Louis in 1952.¹⁶ What he was taught at St. Louis beginning that year created the impetus for the beginning of his newsletter, Lutheran News, later Christian News. Otten describes in no uncertain terms that some St. Louis professors were teaching the historical-critical method:

Christian News had its beginning to a large extent because of what we found while we were studying at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. When we entered the seminary in 1952 we had been led to believe that some professors would try to make us swallow some dead orthodoxy which had no scriptural support. We were determined that we would have to be shown from Holy Scripture that what professors taught was correct. However, we soon discovered that dead orthodoxy was not a problem at Concordia Seminary and that there were students and professors at the seminary who rejected some doctrines clearly taught in the Bible. During the 1953-54 school year a group of students signed a petition requesting the faculty for a clarification of the doctrine of inspiration. Many, though by no means all, could not accept the doctrine of inspiration set forth in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Brief Statement.¹⁷

Otten and other concerned conservative students tried to go through proper channels in trying to answer and put to rest their serious misgivings about the position on Scripture of some of the liberal faculty and students at Concordia. Seminary officials apparently took the position that these conflicts were the results of misunderstandings between the opposing sides. Otten writes in an article "Why Christian News?":

Other concerns about the theological views of various students and faculty members were shared with the administration by a number of conservative students but each time we were told that it was simply a 'semantic' problem, a case of talking past one another.' We complained about various articles which appeared in the Seminarian, a student publication, but nothing was done.¹⁸

Otten even went so far as to appeal to a former LCMS vice-president, and to LCMS president John W. Behnken, about what was going on in the classrooms at St. Louis, all with little or no result.¹⁹ Herman Otten and his fellow conservatives also learned that not only was the historical-critical method being taught in the classrooms, liberal professors and students also had control over the seminary press and bookstore:

During the years we were at Concordia Seminary we also discovered how the liberals manage to control the press and to a large extent the books featured in the seminary book store. The seminary's theological publication was in the hands of liberals ever since the days when Dr. Martin Marty was a student there. Liberal professors such as Dr. Richard Caemmerer were the mentors behind the liberal editors and writers. These liberals often met with Dr. Caemmerer in his 'upper room.' We were unsuccessful in getting an invitation to join this select group.²⁰

Just who were the professors Otten and his conservative cohorts believed taught false doctrine? The editor of Christian News was asked this through correspondence. His reply was a listing of references to various publications he produced or helped produce, among them Handbook of Vital Christian Issues and Christian News Encyclopedia.²¹ Apparently for once Herman Otten had very little to say about historical-criticism at St. Louis.

But others had much to say about the "pioneers" of teaching the historical-critical method at St. Louis. While it has been established that several professors (Arndt, Bretscher, perhaps Franzmann and Schick) possibly taught a mild form of historical-criticism already in the late 1940's, two events happened in 1952 which were highly significant in the implantation of the cancer of historical-criticism at St. Louis. In 1952, Dr. Martin Scharlemann was called to St. Louis to teach in the field of New Testament exegetical

theology. That same year, Dr. Arthur Repp became academic dean at St. Louis.²² These two men played key roles in introducing on a large scale the historical-critical method to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis.

Martin Scharlemann had graduated from the St. Louis in 1934 and earned a doctorate in classics from Washington University in 1938. He served in the parish ministry and as a chaplain in the United States Army Air Force for several years.²³ In the summer of 1949 Martin Scharlemann attended the Princeton Theological Institute in Princeton, New Jersey.²⁴ Here he was to begin to learn some methods of Biblical interpretation which in later years he would deeply regret. Dr. Frederick Danker in his book No Room in the Brotherhood writes: "Dr. Scharlemann, who had been working with Professors Kristen Stendahl of Harvard and Otto Pieper of Princeton on a project in modes of Biblical interpretation thought it was high time for the Synod to come abreast of the contemporary scene in biblical studies."²⁵

After he was called to St. Louis, Scharlemann began working on a project which eventually would become a twenty-six page single spaced paper entitled: "The Bible as Record, Witness and Medium." According to Scharlemann's own note, it was a product of "more than six years of investigation and reflection."²⁶ Scharlemann's reading of this paper to the Northern Illinois District Pastoral Conference created a tremendous controversy, due to its content, which showed a clear espousal to some aspects of the historical-critical method. In the words of Dr. Danker: "In the early months of 1959, Dr. Martin Scharlemann put the finishing touches on a bomb that was to shatter forever the fragile peace of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod."²⁷

The question then is this: How soon did Martin Scharlemann begin teaching the historical-critical method after his arrival at Concordia? The evidence points to very soon. In stating the reasons for beginning Christian News, Herman Otten does not mention any professors by name which he accused of teaching false doctrine. But John Klotz, in a letter previously quoted, states:

I don't recall when I first became acquainted with Dr. Scharlemann. I suspect it was very shortly after he began teaching at Concordia Seminary. At the time I was a member of the faculty of Concordia College River Forest. He was chairman of the Committee on Scholarly Research which sponsored the production of my book, "Genes, Genesis, and Evolution." Subsequently I became a member of that committee, and I got to know Dr. Scharlemann quite well. I believe it is fair to say that he became enamored of historical criticism, and there is little doubt that he referred to its techniques and procedures in his teaching. I shared some of the concerns that the sainted Dr. Becker had regarding some of the materials he wrote (I assume you had the privilege of knowing Dr. Becker) Dr. Scharlemann and I still remained good friends. My theological position was that of Dr. Becker, not that of Dr. Scharlemann.²⁸

According to Dr. Edgar Krentz of Christ Seminary-Seminex, about three years after he came to St. Louis, Dr. Scharlemann presented to the faculty a discussion paper on using the historical-critical method.²⁹ It was prepared by Scharlemann himself and Horace Hummel who was a graduate assistant at the time.³⁰ The content of this paper can only be briefly summarized. In his "Notes" Scharlemann tries very hard to be a conservative Lutheran while at the same time he accepts many of the historical-critical method's presuppositions. Beginning with his definition of the method, it is evident Scharlemann was quite comfortable in using it: "The historical-critical method is in essence the application to Scripture of the principles of historical research and of literary criticism."³¹

Martin Scharlemann's paper consists of twenty points or theses on how a confessional Lutheran could validly use the historical-critical method. Consider three of them:

9.) In matters of ideational as well as grammatical translation, 'equally consecrated Lutheran theologians may differ without on that account being in doctrinal disagreement.' Differences of opinion as to the form of the Scriptural document or the writer's intent do not imply any doubt of the truth whatever is expressed, or any desire to exercise autonomy over the Scriptural revelation. This moves us out of the area of doctrinal disagreement into the sphere of 'permissible exegetical difference' (in accordance with and subject to the analogia fidei and specifically the Lutheran Confessions, of course). The 'conservative' will surely be reluctant to abandon older viewpoints with cogent evidence (where opinions will differ), he will insist on caution and sobriety, etc., but he will also refrain from labeling something as 'rationalistic,' etc., which need not necessarily be so.³²

11.) Let us consider first the problem of ancient historiography. Obviously, there are no 'histories' in the Bible precisely like our histories, although they vary widely among themselves in similarity to our forms (cf. the 'Court History of David' with the Chronicler, the synoptists with John etc.). It is really regrettable that the Hebrew designation of 'former prophets' for many O.T. books was replaced by the Greek (LXX) title, 'historical books.' That is, the Biblical 'histories' are written almost exclusively to illustrate and demonstrate a theological thesis (i.e., the prophetic doctrine of history); they are concerned more with Geschichte than with Historie. The fact that the Biblical records have been revealed in history should also mean that, as with other historical peoples, Israel's memories and traditions of its early existence have been refracted through the prisms of later experiences, determining the selection and accentuation of materials (cf. the Gospels).³³

16.) Among the ancient forms of Scripture, which it is a constant struggle for us to understand and evaluate properly, must probably (and at least may, it would seem, in the light of comparative materials) be included the use of saga, legend, myth, pseudepigraphy, vaticinium ex eventu, etc.,--all of which appear to us to be 'false', but hardly so by the standards of antiquity and presumably then not of Scripture either--seen as historical revelation. This may be compared somewhat to the use throughout Scripture of various kinds of parabolic material--

and even of fables (cf. Judges 9 and II Kings 14). We feel that that hermeneutical rule which insists that these Gattungen must always be labelled as such is an extra-Scriptural one which at least may not be insisted upon as an article of faith (hence possible applications to Johah, Daniel, the Samson and Elisha pericopes, the angel vs. Sennacherib, the visit of the Magi, etc.). That is, there is again here an area of permissible exegetical disparity without any necessary doubt or denial of Scripture's truth (as measured by the original intent). (Cf. also the traditional Lutheran hermeneutics of the apocalyptic literature.)³⁴

A complete reading of "Notes on the Valid Use of the Historico-Critical Method" clearly shows that Scharlemann and Hummel in the year 1955 appeared to accept nearly all of the tenets of the historical-critical method. While Scharlemann and Hummel do reject the extreme elements of it, such as "many" of Rudolf Bultmann's demythologizing applications, they stress in no uncertain terms what a valuable tool the historical-critical method is.³⁵ This can be seen from their concluding paragraph:

20.) Thus, the historico-critical method teaches us again what it means 'to live by faith alone' (i.e., not sight or rational proof), at the same time that it gives us an invaluable key to the original intent and thus also to the contemporary interpretation and application of Scripture. It enhances our appreciation of the magnitude of God's condescension, climaxing in the incarnation of His Son. And it enables the Church today better to interpret contemporary events as part of the same historical process recorded in Scripture leading up to the great eschatological denouement.³⁶

From a careful study of this exploratory paper, one could easily conclude that Martin Scharlemann was a full fledged historical-critic in 1955. The evidence certainly points to it. But there is one dissenting voice about this conclusion that needs to be reckoned with and heard. This is the voice of Dr. Robert Preus, president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Dr. Preus is recognized as the

leading American authority on the theology and writings of the seventeenth century orthodox Lutheran theologians. In both liberal and conservative Lutheran circles, Robert Preus is considered to be one of the most brilliant systematic theologians in Lutheranism today. Dr. Preus taught systematic theology at Concordia Seminary from 1957 to 1974.³⁷ In a letter to the author of this monograph, dated April 2, 1986, Dr. Preus gives a first hand eyewitness account of Martin Scharlemann's involvement in espousing the historical-critical method at St. Louis during the late 1950's.

The first meeting I ever attended among the faculty was the fall retreat in 1957. It was at that meeting that Martin Scharlemann stood up before the entire faculty and declared that the Bible, which is true, 'contains errors.' The reaction from men like Franzmann, Roehrs, Spitz, J.T. Miller, (sic) Merkens, and many, many others was almost violent. He was rejected out-of-hand and the younger liberal men who were already there, like Krentz, sat sedately quiet during the discussion. But Scharlemann was undaunted and went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques, but never actually endorsing the method or even talking much about it. It was his colleagues at the time, Krentz, Fred Danker, and then later Klein and Smith and Casey Jones, and many others in the exegetical and other departments, including Sauer and Wegner (Wisconsin men) who endorsed the method and brought it into full use at the seminary. Scharlemann saw what was happening, drew back, and even repudiated his colleagues in a most forthright way, totally typical of his approach to all issues. The method being totally endorsed and put in action by the exegetical department was then defended by the faculty as such, except for four or five of us including Scharlemann and four men in the systematics department (Bohlmann was not around much in those days).³⁸

The key sentence in Dr. Preus' eyewitness account is: "Scharlemann was undaunted and went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques, but never actually endorsing the method or even talking much about."³⁹ In view of the contents of Scharlemann's 1955 paper, "Valid Uses of the Historico-Critical Method," it appears that

Dr. Preus does not have all his facts, or that he does not have them straight, or at the very least, he is presenting Scharlemann's views in the most favorable light possible, almost at the expense of history. But the writer of these lines has heard Robert Preus speak a number of times as a guest lecturer at Concordia, College, Ann Arbor, Michigan. The lectures were on such topics as the inspiration of Scripture, baptism, and repentance and absolution. It has been his experience that when Robert Preus speaks on a theological topic, he knows what he is talking about. From his numerous books and journal articles, Robert Preus has proven that when he writes on doctrinal subjects, he especially knows what he is talking about. The writer of this research paper will now attempt to synthesize what Scharlemann himself wrote about his views on the historical critical method in 1955 and what Dr. Preus experienced concerning Martin Scharlemann's views of the historical-critical method in 1957. Hopefully, the truth will be preserved and justice will be done to both of these accounts.

Based on Scharlemann's own writings, his own actions, and the accounts of others, it cannot be denied that Martin Scharlemann did accept some presuppositions and some of the methodology of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation. The evidence is simply too overwhelming to conclude otherwise. Preus is right when he comments: "Scharlemann . . . went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques" ⁴⁰ John Klotz: "I believe it is fair to say that he became enamored of historical criticism, and there is little doubt that he referred to its techniques and procedures in his teaching." ⁴¹ Then why did Dr.

Preus write: "Scharlemann was undaunted and went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques, but never actually endorsing the method or talking much about it?"⁴² What the author of this monograph interprets Dr. Preus to be saying is this: Scharlemann did not ever fully endorse the use of all the historical-critical method, just certain aspects of it. Scharlemann in effect "got the ball rolling" down the path to historical-critical methodology, but there were many others who later contributed significantly to introducing this method of Biblical exegesis on a very large and broad scale at St. Louis. Robert Preus writes: "It was his (Scharlemann's) colleagues at the time, Krentz, Fred Danker, and then later Klein and Ehlen and Smith and Casey Jones and many others in the exegetical and other departments, including Sauer and Wegner (Wisconsin men) who endorsed the method and brought it into full use at the seminary."⁴³

After Martin Scharlemann perceived where the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was leading his seminary and his synod, to a total apostasy of every article of the Christian faith, he had a change of heart. This is well documented by the testimony of his colleagues and former students. In a letter dated February 15, 1986, Dr. J. A. O. Preus, former president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod writes:

Scharlemann delivered several papers in Synod supporting the HCM, but was compelled to apologize for disturbing the church over this at our 1962 Cleveland convention. I was there (and) heard the whole thing. I do not know if S. (Scharlemann) ever changed his mind, but he was a changed man after that time (and) began actively opposing his old colleagues and the theology they espoused. So S. (Scharlemann) played a role in introducing the HCM but he was not solely responsible for it. At the time of the walk-out all of the exegetes to my knowledge held the view (and) the rest of the faculty either held it or permitted it.⁴⁴

A former student of Dr. Scharlemann, Professor Daniel Moriarity of Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Michigan writes of his experiences with Dr. Scharlemann in a letter written to the author of this research dissertation, dated January 28, 1986:

Anyway, getting back to your question whether Dr. Scharlemann remained a 'closet historical critic' the rest of his life. My impression is no he didn't. Let me share some facts I know: After John Tietjen was elected president of the seminary, Dr. Scharlemann was the professor who wrote to President Jacob Preus, calling for an investigation of the seminary and its theological stance. He underwent extreme enmity from the faculty because of this request: he was officially censured by the faculty in 1970. It was at this time that the synod first knew that there was a faculty 'majority' and a faculty 'minority.' If he was a 'closet historical critic' during those very painful years (to the point of eventually having a nervous breakdown in 1974 when he was acting president of the seminary and was receiving crank calls at all hours of the night), it would seem so highly ridiculous to go through all that turmoil and tribulation.

As far as my personally hearing such teaching from him, I only had one course with him on the Parables. It was excellent. When some students talked about the differences between the gospels' accounts of the same parables, instead of giving the usual liberal answer that there were mere inventions of the early church, rather, he argued that Jesus had to have told these parables frequently, in more than one setting, and it was left to the evangelist (guided by the Holy Spirit) which version of the parable he would use in his gospel. This seemed to me to be a fair answer, and certainly not the typical answer of a higher critic. I really have to say that I never experienced any aberrations of doctrine in his teaching in the classroom, or in private conversations. I also knew him as my division chairman when I taught Greek and Hebrew at the seminary in 1974-1975. I cannot remember any support given for the historical-critical method. In fact, he often (sic) used to counter that Lutherans use the historical-grammatical method. I have a strong hunch that he coined the term or at least used it rather frequently.⁴⁵

Moreover, Dr. E. J. Otto, one of the editors of Affirm, writes in a letter previously quoted:

. . . I'll say what you probably know, namely that Dr. Scharlemann (Martin, that is. There's a liberal Robert) came—thank God—to a full turn and was a leader among the faithful five who took the Sem and its problems to the then new synodical president, Dr. J. A. O. Preus. Scharlemann's days as acting president, following the suspension of Tietjen, were crucial to the successful return of the school to the old paths.⁴⁶

Scharlemann's colleague on the St. Louis faculty for seventeen years, Dr. Robert Preus, in the same letter previously quoted, testifies that Prof. Scharlemann later refuted the historical-critical method, the very method of Biblical interpretation he was instrumental in introducing at his alma mater: "Scharlemann saw what was happening, drew back, and even repudiated his colleagues in a most forthright way . . . "⁴⁷

Dr. Preus of the Fort Wayne seminary was kind enough to send to the author a series of essays on the historical-critical method, published by Affirm, entitled: Occasional Papers. One of the essays written by Martin Scharlemann, entitled "Some Sobering Reflections on the Use of the Historical-Critical Method," reveals significantly that Scharlemann's perception and appraisal of the historical-critical method had indeed changed:

Because the Scriptures are the Word of God, written for us men by the chosen and inspired prophets and apostles of God, the Historical-Critical Method is as inadequate (to put it mildly) for the interpretation of the Scriptures as a two-dimensional map is inadequate for the geographer's interpretation of the earth. When they are consistent, these historical critics of the Bible do in reality and in practice deny that the meaning of the text which the Christian teaching exhibited in the Lutheran Confessions (Book of Concord) is authoritative and binding for the doctrine and life of all Christians. . . .

What has been said so far is not intended to suggest that theological students ought not be taught about the Method. No responsible curriculum could leave out such a study. But the teaching of the material needs to be done in much the same

way as time is given, let us say, to a study and analysis of the allegorical method as it was used in the medieval church. The Method needs to be explained in such a way as to enable students and pastors to read with understanding the literature which uses the Method, but with the constant caveats of its pitfalls and fallacies.⁴⁸

Dr. Martin Scharlemann probably would have been more than happy to clarify his role in introducing the historical-critical method to St. Louis and his role in trying to suppress its use after his change of heart. Unfortunately, Professor Scharlemann died in August of 1982.⁴⁹ For better or for worse, his writings and the testimony of those who knew and worked with him must now defend his name.

While Dr. Martin Scharlemann continued with his exploratory papers on the historical-critical method, two younger men on the St. Louis faculty, Frederick Danker and Edgar Krentz, began quietly introducing their students to the modernistic method of Biblical interpretation they had learn and been exposed to in their graduate work, Danker at the University of Chicago, and Krentz at the Washington University.⁵⁰

Frederick Danker graduated from St. Louis in 1945. After less than ten years in the parish, he became a professor of exegetical theology (New Testament) at St. Louis in 1954. He earned a doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1963.⁵¹

Edgar Krentz never served in any Missouri Synod parish as a pastor. He graduated from Concordia, St. Louis in 1952. After earning an M.A. from Washington University, Krentz joined the St. Louis faculty in the fall of 1953.⁵² Danker and Krentz both played key roles in popularizing the historical-critical method at Concordia, St. Louis. A reading of

even one chapter of Danker's book, No Room in the Brotherhood, subtitled, "The Preus-Otten Purge of Missouri," reveals Danker's colors as a thorough going theological liberal.⁵³ Professor Edward Fredrich of the Wisconsin Synod aptly sums up the quality and content of Danker's monograph:

The one good reason for reading the book is to find out just what 'moderates' were thinking, as the Missouri conflicts went on. That the books tells us. It demonstrates, not the way things were, but the way one side thought they were.⁵⁴

Dr. Krentz was allowed to diffuse his liberal theological views significantly by being appointed librarian at Concordia, St. Louis in 1955.⁵⁵ Carl Meyer credits Krentz among others for the St. Louis library's acquisition of "current theological works."⁵⁶ Dr. Krentz was asked through correspondence to clarify and delineate his role in promulgating historical criticism at St. Louis. Now a professor at Christ Seminary-Seminex, Dr. Krentz responded:

I received your letter asking for information about the introduction of the historical critical method into the classrooms of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

I have now been removed from the unfortunate controversy in the LCMS for a decade, and from the early years of teaching at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) by over thirty years. At this time both my interests and time are devoted to other topics in biblical studies. For that reason I will not use the opportunity to respond to your questions about Missouri Synod history.⁵⁷

The St. Louis exegetical department during the 1950's deserves only some of the infamy for introducing the historical-critical method to Concordia Seminary's classrooms. There is substantial documented evidence that a very real impetus for introducing "modern scholarly conclusions" concerning Biblical hermeneutics came from the offices of the seminary administration, particularly the offices of the president and the academic

dean.

The calling of Martin Scharlemann to the exegetical department in 1952 was not the only significant event that happened at Concordia that year.

That same year, Dr. Arthur Repp was appointed academic dean. Dr. Repp was a 1929 graduate of the St. Louis seminary. He joined the faculty of his alma mater in 1945, teaching in the field of Christian education.

Repp earned a Ph.D. from Washington University in 1951.⁵⁸ Repp put his interest in Christian education into action in two ways. Under his leadership, the drive to have Concordia Seminary accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools (AATS) gained momentum. The seminary became an associate member in 1956.⁵⁹ Repp also dedicated himself to recruiting professors for St. Louis who were "progressive" in their theological perspectives.

A year later in 1953, Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer, grandson of one of the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod, was called to succeed Louis J. Sieck as president of the St. Louis seminary.⁶⁰ Fuerbringer was a 1925 graduate of St. Louis and was president of Concordia Teacher's College, Seward, Nebraska, before being called to St. Louis.⁶¹ Dr. Fuerbringer, like his academic dean Dr. Repp, immediately began a movement at the seminary to "modernize" the faculty. Three years after Fuerbringer arrived, the first sabbatical leaves were granted to St. Louis professors to do advanced graduate and research work.⁶² Concordia's accreditation movement under Fuerbringer's administration resulted in the AATS accepting Concordia as a member in 1964.⁶³

However, the most significant and ominous venture Fuerbringer and Repp devised to modernize the faculty was their efforts to attract professors who

subscribed to modern and scholarly methods of Biblical interpretation.

Were Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp largely responsible for bringing professors to Concordia who were historical critics? There is substantial evidence which indicates this is exactly what happened. Professor Daniel Moriarity in a letter previously quoted, writes:

I really can't say whether Dr. Scharlemann was the person who introduced the historical-critical method to Concordia Seminary or not. However, I do remember hearing Dr. Lewis Spitz (the elder) mention during the 'hub-bub' of the 'war years' in St. Louis (1974-75), when so many on the (then) faculty majority were pointing the finger at Dr. Scharlemann, that it was really Drs. Arthur Repp and A. O. Fuerbringer (former president of Concordia Seminary) who instigated the movement to 'open up' the faculty to more 'scholarly conclusions'. Dr. Spitz reported to a small group of us once that he overheard Drs. Repp and Fuerbringer talking as they were walking home behind him one evening after classes. Dr. Repp mentioned that something was going to have to be done to 'modernize' the faculty. The conclusion was reached that if the faculty was going to prepare pastors for a modern ministry, they were going to have to go to accredited universities for their advanced degrees. It also seems to me that he said that in that same discussion there was concern expressed about the academic credentials of the faculty and how this affected the educational standing of the seminary (accreditation was part of this discussion).⁶⁴

Is this story the proverbial "smoking gun" which solves the "mystery," of how the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis? While the mentioned sources are reliable, it would certainly be a mistake to conclude on the basis of this account, told third hand, of an overheard conversation transpiring over thirty years ago, that Repp and Fuerbringer were the real instigators in bringing historical criticism to St. Louis.

The basic assumption, however, although originating from less than authoritative and irrefutable sources, does have further substantiation,

some of it very conclusive.

Consider the testimony of the two Preus brothers, Jack and Robert, both intimately connected to the turmoil at the St. Louis seminary in the days preceeding the formation of Seminex. Both were asked through correspondence if Alfred Fuerbringer and Arthur Repp were the instigators in bringing the historical-critical method to Concordia, St. Louis.

Jack Preus responded by stating:

Fuerb. (and) Repp as pres. (and) dean of the sem hired many profs who either favored or permitted the H. C. method. I am sure they personally accepted it. They were probably encouraged to do so by Scharlemann (and) others.⁶⁵

Robert Preus supplements his brother's insights by writing:

First of all, both Fuerbringer and Repp had nothing to do with actually promoting the historical critical method. Neither was an exegete and neither read enough in that area to know even what the historical critical method was. But Fuerbringer, in order to build up the school, as he thought, and Repp because he was a bit liberal in his openness to all kinds of new exegetical 'insights,' did promote professors who did teach the method.⁶⁶

The testimony of the Preus brothers is significant considering these two did more to try to restore confessional Lutheranism at Concordia, St. Louis after the walkout than anyone else. But the argument for Fuerbringer and Repp being the instigators of bringing historical criticism to St. Louis could not be complete unless the two men themselves were allowed to defend themselves and give their version of their roles as president and academic dean during their years of service at St. Louis. Both men were written on March 19, 1986 and were asked forthrightly if they were the ones primarily responsible for bringing professors

to St. Louis who subscribed to the historical-critical method.

Drs. Repp and Fuerbringer are now living in retirement. Both are well into their eighties, yet each was kind enough to respond to a rather uncomplimentary accusation. Dr. Arthur Repp, in a letter dated March 22, 1986, stated his role as academic dean at Concordia, St. Louis:

Thank you for your letter of March 19 and your concern for God's will in accord with the 8th Commandment, a sometimes rare concern in church controversies.

I was academic dean at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1952 to 1972 and as such had the responsibility of recommending new faculty members to the president and from there to an electoral board who made the final choice.

Since the 'historical-critical method' is defined in a variety of ways, I must assume that you define it in a manner contrary to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

One of the criteria for recommending a candidate to the faculty was his loyalty to the Confessions. I must say emphatically that no one I suggested was guilty of denying basic tenets of the Holy Scriptures and at no time, to my knowledge, taught the historical critical method in a manner contrary to the Confessions.

Unfortunately some of the 'conservative' Lutherans teach the Bible without realizing that God was often speaking to people in terms they could understand, e.g. the universe. If he had spoken of the universe in accord with today's concept they would not have understood what he was saying. Literalism often destroys the message and that is not orthodoxy.⁶⁷

Obviously, the author of this dissertation and Dr. Repp have two different definitions of the historical-critical method. This accounts for the difference why the writer of these lines names Dr. Repp as one of the men most responsible for bringing the historical-critical method to St. Louis, while Dr. Repp maintains his innocence on the basis of his definition of the historical-critical method.

Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer, now living in retirement in Norman, Oklahoma, proved from his responding letter that he is quite a scholar even in his retirement years. He responded to an inquiry about his role in bringing professors to St. Louis who subscribed to the historical-critical method with a detailed and well thought-out three page letter. Dr. Fuerbringer began on a very helpful note by giving his definition of the historical-critical method, using the words of Robert Smith, a former Seminex professor:

. . . historical-critical methodology is a tool for Biblical interpretation and can be used both negatively and positively, (he) compared it to a hammer than can be utilized for beneficial purposes like building a house but can also be used destructively, e.g., to kill a person by hitting him over the head. One doesn't condemn the tool for what the user does with it.⁶⁸

On the basis of this rather open-ended definition, Fuerbringer then traces the use of "historical critical judgments conservatively used," by such men as his father, Ludwig Fuerbringer and the Wisconsin Synod's August Pieper.⁶⁹

The real gist of Fuerbringer's letter comes when he asks the question: "So what has all this to do with the time of my presidency of Concordia Seminary (1953-1969)?" Fuerbringer continues by writing:

My father and his contemporaries attended no universities or divinity schools, basing their teaching on reading and independent study. But their younger colleagues began to study elsewhere (Walter A. Maier at Harvard; Wm. Arndt at Washington/St. Louis; etc.) The latter were also quite conservative but did expand somewhat on the historical critical judgments of their seniors (e.g., Arndt with regard to Ephesians). When some of the next generation of students studied, in greater numbers and at more universities including some in Europe, they discovered that among the exponents of historical criticism there were a goodly number of sincere Bible-believing Christians much of whose methodology could be adopted. Those in this group of Concordia

graduates, plus a few Wisconsin Synod men, who were called to to the seminary during my administration were all examined by a committee consisting of the president of the synod, the president of the district, a member of the synod's board for higher education and members of the seminary board. All were found to be in agreement with the doctrinal paragraph of the synod's constitution. Where they differed in matters of interpretation from the more traditional viewpoints they were asked to consult with their older colleagues. I regret that later some of them went off the deep end, as it were, and failed to use the proper amount of moderation, patience and sound pedagogical judgment in dealing with others, especially some very conservative students, clergy and laity. Some of the latter began to use unbrotherly tactics over against some of the professors and so a controversy began and became quite heated. I don't claim to be without fault in all of this, but I maintained then and have since that during my presidency as far as I could find out none of the faculty members denied the truth and reliability of any part of the Holy Scriptures/or taught contrary to the Lutheran confessions. Of course, I did not agree with all of the conclusions reached in matters of interpretation or historical criticism.⁷⁰

Dr. Fuerbringer traces how many St. Louis professors began more and more to do advanced studies overseas in Europe and at secular universities in this country. Fuerbringer freely admits that these men learned the methodology of historical criticism and adopted it from exponents of it at these institutions.

Fuerbringer, like Repp, insists that these men's theological positions were sound: "All were found in full agreement with the doctrinal paragraph of the synod's constitution."⁷¹ He shows little remorse for the false doctrines the historical criticism began producing. According to Dr. Fuerbringer, the most colossal mistake these men made was they "failed to use the proper amount of moderation, patience, and sound pedagogical judgment in dealing with others, especially some very conservative students, clergy, and laity."⁷²

As one reads Dr. Fuerbringer's comments, one is continually forced to ponder if the president of the St. Louis seminary really knew what was being taught in the exegetical classes at the seminary during his administration. Dr. Fuerbringer states: " . . . during my presidency as far as I could find out none of the faculty members denied the truth and reliability of any part of the Holy Scriptures or taught contrary to the Lutheran confessions."⁷³

From this last quotation from Dr. Fuerbringer, it is evident that both the seminary president and the academic dean saw nothing wrong in the transition Concordia Seminary underwent from the historical-grammatical method to the historical-critical method during the 1950's and the early 1960's. They were not alarmed at the cancer they helped introduce at their institution, even though Fuerbringer acquiescently states: "Of course, I did not agree with all of the conclusions reached in matters of interpretation or historical criticism."⁷⁴ Fuerbringer and Repp did not realize that the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was malignant because this modern method of hermeneutics did not militate against their hermeneutical presuppositions or their concept of confessional subscription.

A careful reading of two letters written by Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer in 1966 in response to an inquiry by then LCMS president, Dr. Oliver R. Harms, about the doctrinal position of the St. Louis faculty reveals that Fuerbringer during his years as Concordia Seminary president had become quite an articulate and formidable exponent of the historical-critical method practiced by the St. Louis faculty.⁷⁵

This dissertation is above personally attacking either Dr. Repp or Dr. Fuerbringer. These two retired seminary professors proved themselves to be Christian gentlemen by their correspondence. But the writer of these lines considers these two men to be major characters in a high tragedy, a tragedy played against the backdrop of the Concordia Seminary campus. For ~~what~~ could be more tragic than this scenario: Two men, who were given roles of very important responsibility by their church body, as seminary president and academic dean, set out in the name of scholarship to train young men for a "more excellent ministry" by instigating a modern method of Biblical interpretation. What was the result? The cancer of historical-criticism infiltrated an entire seminary and nearly destroyed the confessional position of an entire synod. Although Fuerbringer and Repp embarked upon a venture to educate men for a modern Christian ministry, what they ultimately helped accomplish was that through St. Louis educated pastors, tens of thousands of Missouri Synod Lutherans were led astray from their confessional Lutheran position, a position the Missouri Synod had championed for over a century. Yet, it was all done in the name of modern scholarship.

Chapter III of "Cancer at Concordia" closes with the patient, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis infected with the cancer of the historical-critical method. It is now the mid 1950's. Martin Scharlemann and Horace Hummel have delivered their paper supporting the historical-critical method. The fateful series of events which lead to the Seminex walkout in February of 1974 have now commenced.

Chapter III closes by once again asking the thesis sentence of this monograph: "How did the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation come to be introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis?" Can it be traced to one person on a specific date and year? Dr. E. J. Otto says no. Few would argue that the former chairman of the St. Louis board of control is wrong. The historical-critical method was introduced to Concordia, St. Louis as a result of the two arms of the liberal movement which quietly infiltrated the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the counter-confessional movement and the counter-Biblical movement. It came to the St. Louis seminary under the name of modern Biblical scholarship. It came by such exegetical "pioneers" as Martin Scharlemann, Edgar Krentz, and Frederick Danker in the field of New Testament theology, and Carl Graesser, Norman Habel, and Alfred von Rohr Sauer in Old Testament exegesis.^{76,77} It came under the auspices of the St. Louis seminary president, Alfred O. Fuerbringer and academic dean Arthur Repp.

Who deserves the blame and denunciation for introducing the historical-critical method at St. Louis? The blame is to be shared by many, several St. Louis faculty members can be specifically mentioned. But what really caused historical criticism to come to Concordia was the Missouri Synod's Weltanschauung, its mindset inclined to appear scholarly and prominent in the public eye. When this point is considered, hundreds if not thousands in Missouri must share the blame for events transpiring up to February 1974. When Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp decided to take the St. Louis down the path to more scholarly conclusions concerning Biblical studies, it

was as if they were two doctors who were vaccinating their patient, Concordia Seminary, against the languor and dormancy of "dead orthodoxy."

Little did they know, little did anyone know, that the medicine administered to Concordia Seminary during the 1950's, in order to revitalize the institution, was in reality a cancer, the cancer of historical criticism.

NOTE ON THE PREFACE

¹Kurt Marquart, Anatomy of an Explosion, with an introduction by Robert Preus, (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Press, 1977), pp. 49, 101.

NOTES ON CHAPTER I

¹Theodore Laetsch, The Abiding Word, vols. I and II., (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946, 1947), vol. I, p. vii; vol. II., table of contents.

²August Pieper, "Reminiscences from Professor August Pieper," WELS Historical Institute Journal, vol. 1., no. 2., (Fall 1983), p. 56.

³Ibid

⁴Carl S. Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 307.

⁵Pieper, p. 56.

⁶Meyer, p. 1.

⁷Meyer, p. 91.

⁸Meyer, pp 91, 104.

⁹Meyer, p. 104.

¹⁰Meyer, pp. 190-191.

¹¹Paul L. Maier, A Man Spoke, A World Listened: The Story of Walter A. Maier, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1963), p. 24.

¹²Maier, pp. 24-25.

¹³Maier, p. 93.

¹⁴Meyer, p. 191.

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¹⁵Concordia Seminary Board of Control Minutes, January 18, 1926, p. 2.,
quoted in Meyer, pp. 190-191.

¹⁶Meyer, p. 191.

¹⁷Martin Graebner to Theodore Graebner, St. Paul, MN, October 4, 1927,
Theodore Graebner papers, CHI, Box 24, quoted in Meyer, p. 191.

¹⁸Theodore Graebner papers, Box 24, letter dated December 27, 1927, with
copies to Prof. P. E. Kretzmann and Prof. J. T. Mueller, quoted in Meyer, p. 110.

¹⁹Martin Graebner to Theodore Graebner, St. Paul, MN, December 28, 1927,
Theodore Graebner papers, CHI, Box 24, quoted in Meyer, pp. 191-192.

²⁰Martin Graebner to P. E. Kretzmann, St. Paul, MN, December 28, 1927,
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²¹Martin Graebner to P. E. Kretzmann, quoted in Meyer, p. 192.

²²Ibid.

²³Eldon Weisheit, The Zeal of His House, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing
House, 1973), p. 94.

²⁴Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America, (Philadel-
phia: Fortress Press, 1955, revised ed., 1965), p. 347.

²⁵Weisheit, p. 94.

²⁶Meyer, p. 114.

²⁷Meyer, pp. 241-242.

²⁸Meyer, pp. 114, 241-242.

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¹Marquart, pp. 80-81

²Marquart, p. 49.

³Marquart, p. 101.

⁴Edward C. Fredrich, "The Great Debate with Missouri," Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, vol. 74, no. 2., (April 1974), p. 157.

⁵Meyer, p. 246.

⁶Ibid

⁷Ibid

⁸Rev. A. T. Kretzmann, interview held in his home, on Wednesday afternoon, April 2, 1986.

⁹Paul E. Kretzmann, in a letter to Rev. Paul Burgdorf, February 19, 1940, obtained from the papers of Rev. Curtis Peterson.

¹⁰Confessional Lutheran, Paul Burgdorf, ed., vol. I., no. 1., (January 1940), p. 1.

¹¹Confessional Lutheran, vol. I., no. 1., p. 4.

¹²Meyer, p. 298.

¹³Concordia Seminary Catalog, St. Louis, MO, 1973-1974, p. 11.

¹⁴Reinhold H. Goetjen, Holy Love and Sinful Love, Holy Hatred and Sinful Hatred, published by the author, no date, p. 2.

¹⁵Goetjen, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶Meyer, p. 247.

¹⁷Meyer, pp. 246-247.

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¹⁸Meyer, p. 247.

¹⁹Weisheit, p. 95.

²⁰Weisheit, pp. 95-96.

²¹Paul H. Burgdorf, "We Must Watch Our Seminaries!", "The Confessional Lutheran", vol. VI., no. 6., (June 1945) pp. 65-66.

²²Maier, p. 259.

²³Meyer, p. 193.

²⁴Concordia Seminary catalog, 1973-1974, pp. 11, 19.

²⁵Report on Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Book of Reports and Memorials, 1947, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 6.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Report on Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Book of Reports and Memorials, 1950, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 10.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Book of Reports and Memorials, 1950, pp. 57-60.

³¹Book of Reports and Memorials, 1950, p. 60.

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¹Book of Reports and Memorials, 1950, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), Memorial 634, pp. 499, 503.

²Book of Reports and Memorials, 1950, p. 502.

³Book of Reports and Memorials, 1950, pp. 487-515.

⁴Book of Reports and Memorials, 1950, Memorial 636, pp. 504-505.

⁵Jaroslav Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), dust jacket.

⁶Pelikan, p. 119.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Marquart, pp. 108-109.

⁹John Jeske, Interview conducted in his home, March 12, 1986.

¹⁰Marquart, p. 109.

¹¹John C. Tietjen, Letter to the author, March 18, 1986.

¹²Alfred T. Kretzmann, interview, April 2, 1986.

¹³Ewald J. Otto, Letter to the author, January 30, 1986, pp 1-2.

¹⁴John Klotz, Letter to the author, February 4, 1986, p. 1.

¹⁵Marquart, p. 103.

¹⁶Herman Otten, "Why Christian News?" Christian News Encyclopedia, Herman Otten, ed., vol. I., (Washington, MO: Missouriian Publishing Co., 1983), p. 457.

¹⁷Ibid.

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¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Herman Otten, Letter to the author, March 9, 1986.

²²Concordia Seminary catalog, 1973-1974, pp. 15-16.

²³Ibid.

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²⁵Frederick Danker, No Room in the Brotherhood, assisted by Jan Schambach, (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1977), p. 5.

²⁶Ibid...

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Klotz, Letter, February 4, 1986, p. 1.

²⁹Edgar Krentz, Letter to the author, January 20, 1986.

³⁰Horace Hummel and Martin Scharlemann, "Notes on the Valid Use of the Historico-Critical Method." (unpublished paper, ca., 1955), p. 1.

³¹Hummel and Scharlemann, p. 1.

³²Hummel and Scharlemann, pp. 2-3.

³³Hummel and Scharlemann, p. 3.

³⁴Hummel and Scharlemann, p. 5.

³⁵Hummel and Scharlemann, p. 6.

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³⁶Hummel and Scharlemann, pp. 6-7.

³⁷Robert Preus, Letter to the author, April 2, 1986, p. 1.

³⁸Robert Preus, Letter, pp. 1-2.

³⁹Robert Preus, Letter, p. 1.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Klotz, Letter, p. 1.

⁴²Robert Preus, Letter, p. 1.

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⁴⁴J. A. O. Preus, Letter to the author, February 15, 1986.

⁴⁵Daniel Moriarity, Letter, January 28, 1986, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁶Ewald J. Otto, Letter, p. 1.

⁴⁷Robert Preus, Letter, p. 1.

⁴⁸Martin Scharlemann, "Some Sobering Reflections on the Use of the Historical-Critical Method," in Occasional Papers, (Milwaukee: Affirm, 1973), pp. 5, 11.

⁴⁹"Biography of Martin H. Scharlemann," Concordia Journal, Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, ed., vol. 8., no. 6., (November 1982), p. 202.

⁵⁰Concordia Seminary catalog, 1973-1974, pp. 11, 14.

⁵¹Concordia Seminary catalog, p. 11.

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⁵³Danker, title page.

⁵⁴Edward C. Fredrich, review of No Room in the Brotherhood, by Frederick Danker, in the Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, vol. 74., no. 4., (October 1977), p. 341.

⁵⁵Concordia Seminary catalog, p. 14.

⁵⁶Meyer, p. 292.

⁵⁷Edgar Krentz, Letter to the author, January 20, 1986.

⁵⁸Concordia Seminary catalog, p. 15.

⁵⁹Meyer, p. 285.

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⁶⁵J. A. O. Preus, Letter, February 15, 1986.

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⁶⁷Arthur Repp, Letter to the author, March 22, 1986.

⁶⁸Alfred O. Fuerbringer, Letter to the author, March 31, 1986, p. 1.

⁶⁹Fuerbringer, p. 2.

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⁷¹Fuerbringer, p. 3.

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⁷⁵Board of Control, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Exodus from Concordia, (St. Louis: Concordia College, 1977), pp. 9-11.

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NOTES ON THE VALID USE OF THE HISTORICO - CRITICAL METHOD

[Ed. note: This paper was prepared some five years ago by Hummel and myself in an attempt to provide some basic orientation. We are happy to be able to redistribute it at this time so that it might possibly come under discussion. - Scharlemann]

1. Definition: The historico-critical method is in essence the application to Scripture of the principles of historical research and of literary criticism. It seeks to do justice to the "human side" of Scripture as well as (at least within the Church) to its "divine side" (revelatory, inspired character). It is interested not only in the historical "background" of the revelation, but seeks to see Israel's history and the Church's creation as revelation. History is not only the arena, but the stuff of revelation. History is a means of revelation as well as of redemption.

An important pre-requisite to the understanding of this historical process is the arrangement of the Biblical material in chronological order and the establishment of the relations between the various parts. This the historico-critical method seeks to do by employing scientific methods of observation, analysis, hypothesis, verification, etc. The tentative nature of many of the method's conclusions is due to the exiguity of evidence and the nature of the materials, but this does not discredit the method as such. It is justifiable (as an aspect of the usus rationis ministerialis) only because and to the extent that it aids us in understanding and interpreting Scripture. It is no more "theoretical" or "speculative" in character than traditional approaches which assumed that ancient attitudes toward authorship, forms, means of communication, etc., were identical with Western ones.

2. The historico-critical method becomes necessarily and essentially vicious or "negative" only when it proceeds from rationalistic or naturalistic assumptions such as would make the Scripture only another human book, would deny revelation, the possibility of miracle, etc.

3. The fact that many of the early practitioners of the method were such agnostics or extremists does not vitiate the method as such, where it is used within the context of the Christian faith, any more than the use of grammar, textual criticism, etc., by agnostics forbids us to make use of those disciplines.

4. The introduction of the historico-critical method also involves a clarification of what we mean by the "uniqueness" of Scripture. Earlier generations often interpreted this in such a narrow sense that it was applied not only to the theological (revealed) content of Scripture but also to the historical forms in which the revelation came. It was, accordingly, considered almost necessarily irreverent to approach Scripture at all as one might any other book, with the result that even grammatical and text-critical disciplines were sometimes looked upon with deep suspicion (and this viewpoint, unfortunately, is often considered the necessary meaning of "verbal inspiration"). Hence, the fathers were often prevented from a consistent application of their principles of

"non-mechanical inspiration," "progressive revelation," etc. That "Scripture interprets Scripture" refers primarily to its theological message, not to the external tools of exegesis.

5. Archaeology, perhaps more than anything else in recent years, has once and for all taught us that God's people in the Biblical period cannot be considered in a cultural and ideational vacuum in isolation from their contemporaries, as tradition (partly through no fault of its own) and even classical Wellhausenism were wont to do. At the same time, we may note with gratitude that the solid, objective evidence introduced by archaeology has discredited the apriorism of much earlier scholarship, forcing most modern scholars to proceed more inductively and cautiously, and to label hypotheses more frequently as such.

6. This "other side" of archaeology also needs to be stressed: if archaeology has convinced scholarship of the "substantial historicity" of the Biblical account (pace certain early hypercritics), it has also vastly increased the complexity of the exegetical task by showing us how "old" the Old Testament (especially) really is. Hence, great care must be taken not to dismiss newer viewpoints as simply "theoretical," "speculative," etc.

7. Archaeology, then, has demonstrated both the vast gulf which separated Israel theologically from its neighbors and the phenomenal extent to which Israel used the external forms of its environment e.g., its Semitic or Greek languages, covenant, kingship (the alien origin of which and initial opposition to which the Bible also records), prophetism, sacrifice, etc. Much of Israel's history may be considered under the caption of its struggle to assimilate foreign forms without their original pagan content (to which the prophets often responded with "back to the wilderness" refrains). Furthermore, these forms often changed or developed (= progressive revelation) without substantial change of contents. Since history is an unfolding process from the Biblical viewpoint, and since God has dealt with mankind in an historical manner, the extent and character of His revelatory and redemptive activity tend to correspond with man's spiritual development.

8. Obviously, it is indispensable that the exegete enter as much as possible into the forms of antiquity in which the revelation of Scripture is couched. Not only a grammatical translation of the Biblical documents is necessary, but an "ideational translation" as well. The same words mean different things to different people at different times. The original meaning is the only possible key to and control over the "translated" meaning. The degree to which "translation" of this sort was necessary the Church seems to have begun to forget already in sub-apostolic times as it moved out of the Semitic into the Greek orbit. Everyone recognizes the innate peril of all translation, but everyone also concedes its indispensability.

9. In matters of ideational as well as grammatical translation, "equally consecrated Lutheran theologians may differ without on that account being in doctrinal disagreement." Differences of opinion as to the form of the Scriptural document or the writer's intent do not imply

any doubt of the truth of whatever is expressed, or any desire to exercise autonomy over the Scriptural revelation. This moves us out of the area of doctrinal disagreement into the sphere of "permissible exegetical difference" (in accordance with and subject to the analogia fidei and specifically the Lutheran Confessions, of course). The "conservative" will surely be reluctant to abandon older viewpoints without cogent evidence (where opinions will differ), he will insist on caution and sobriety, etc., but he will also refrain from labelling something as "rationalistic," etc., which need not necessarily be so.

10. We submit that such matters as historiography, "myth," attitudes toward date, authorship, and transmission of documents, etc., belong (like language, architecture, etc.) to the external forms of revelation. At any rate, we fail to see any a priori reasons why God could not or should not have employed them. A revelation that came in history would almost perforce (i.e., if not "mechanical") have to make use of these forms of its times. To impose our forms and presuppositions upon the ancient forms is to run the risk (to say the least) of completely misunderstanding and misapplying them. Again disagreements will be (within the Church) exegetical in nature.

11. Let us consider first the problem of ancient historiography. Obviously, there are no "histories" in the Bible precisely like our histories, although they vary widely among themselves in similarity to our forms (cf. the "Court History of David" with the Chronicler, the synoptists with John etc.). It is really regrettable that the Hebrew designation of "former prophets" for many O.T. books was replaced by the Greek (LXX) title, "historical books." That is, the Biblical "histories" are written almost exclusively to illustrate and demonstrate a theological thesis (i.e., the prophetic doctrine of history); they are concerned more with Geschichte than with Historie. The fact that the Biblical records have been revealed in history should also mean that, as with other historical peoples, Israel's memories and traditions of its early existence have been refracted through the prisms of later experiences, determining the selection and accentuation of materials (cf. the Gospels).

12. Modern "history" on the contrary, is (for better or for worse) more "secular." It seeks to discover "was eigentlich geschehen ist" (E. Meyer) more than after the meaning and import of events. It is concerned with political, economic, sociological, psychological, and other factors at least as much as with the theological ones. For us to rewrite Biblical history from these standpoints does not falsify the Scriptural accounts, but is to "translate" them into the forms of modern historiography and to prevent the reader from approaching the Biblical accounts as though they had been revealed today and were complete, "objective" accounts, (thus sparing the Church many unnecessary battles in defense of the "truth" of Scripture). Of course, the Church dare never forget the theological accents of the original documents either; on the contrary, its kerygmatic needs are still the same as those which resulted in the writing, transmission, and canonization by the Church of the Biblical documents. However, when Churchmen engage in activities that are not so immediately kerygmatic (such as the writing of history), they surely must use modern forms in order to communicate (cf. Bright).

13. It probably can be demonstrated (and, at least there is sufficient archaeological evidence to warrant one's holding this exegetical opinion) that the Biblical (Hebrew, "prelogical") approach to "truth" diverged considerably from the Greek (Aristotelian) one and even more from the modern "scientific" one. Truth is expressed not so much in forthright, prosaic propositions and in painstaking reporting of the naked facts as in "homiletical," "mythical," (however much everyone dislikes the term), tendentious, semi-poetical forms. "Pragmatic history" is not as important as "paradigmatic history" (i.e., events becoming paradigms and illustrations of the theological "truth" thus exemplified. To embellish, exaggerate (hyperbolically), or omit salient details is not, according to ancient standards, a falsification of the accounts, but an increase in their "truth!" Heilsgeschehen, aetiology, etc., may play their legitimate role, although probably minor ones. The predictive element in many prophecies lies not so much in their details as in their point of comparison (viz., the establishment of the kingdom cf. apocalyptic).

14. This, be it noted, is not the question of "inerrancy," but that of the author's own standards or intentions, by which alone he can be measured and interpreted. If this is sufficiently borne in mind, the problem of accuracy becomes a minimal one (relevant to probably less than 5% of the total material). However, we have no difficulty even with these "errors" of Scripture, because they too are obviously on the periphery of its total intent, and we trust that the Holy Spirit, who alone guides all our exegesis, can still out of Scripture lead us "into all truth." We must distinguish between facts that count and facts that do not.

15. In this light the problem of the N.T.'s use of the O.T. should also be approached. Again, the ancient writers should not be invoked to provide answers to questions which they did not confront. A historical revelation would mean that the N.T. authors (and probably by analogy our Lord as well) cite and refer to O.T. books according to their current designations; the modern discipline of isagogics is scarcely known until the 19th century (cf. also the N.T.'s frequent use of the LXX, with apparent innocence of modern text-critical disciplines). Secondly, because the N.T. writers were uninterested in the bare facts of history in our more "secular" sense, they apparently do not attempt to state the original meaning or give a "historical exegesis" of O.T. texts, but are rather concerned with their contemporary, "filled" (=πλήρωμα) meaning. They attempt to show how all of God's previous activity has now reached a climax in the "coming near of the Kingdom." In retrospect, it became clear just what God had been doing in past history and it was (and is) possible to give a "spiritual" meaning (i.e., the Holy Spirit's ultimate intent) to earlier words, above and beyond their immediate, historical meaning (but historical exegesis still remaining indispensable as a control over this "extended" meaning.) Thus, the N.T. writers, using the methodology of their times, restate ("homiletically"?) in terms of their fuller revelation what the ancient texts would mean if they had been revealed in their own age, they draw (legitimate) conclusions from O.T. premises, etc. Their quotes of the O.T. are random, but typical (cf. the ethical directives of the N.T.), thus teaching us what we must do to the entire O.T. if we are not to abandon its use to the synagogue or succumb to "historicism." The archaeological and philological controls

over O.T. exegesis would seem to lend enough plausibility to this thesis that the Christian exegete would at least have the option to apply the principle that "Scriptura sui ipsius interpres est" in this way to the N.T.'s use of the O.T. without denying the "truth" of the N.T. or impairing the linear unity of God's revelatory and soteriological activity recorded in both testaments.

16. Among the ancient forms of Scripture, which it is a constant struggle for us to understand and evaluate properly, must probably (and at least may, it would seem, in the light of comparative materials) be included the use of saga, legend, myth, pseudepigraphy, vaticinium ex eventu, etc.,--all of which appear to us to be "false", but hardly so by the standards of antiquity and presumably then not of Scripture either--seen as historical revelation. This may be compared somewhat to the use throughout Scripture of various kinds of parabolic material--and even of fables (cf. Judges 9 and II Kings 14). We feel that that hermeneutical rule which insists that these Gattungen must always be labelled as such is an extra-Scriptural one which at least may not be insisted upon as an article of faith (hence possible applications to Jonah, Daniel, the Samson and Elisha pericopes, the angel vs. Sennacherib, the visit of the Magi, etc.). That is, there is again here an area of permissible, exegetical disparity without any necessary doubt or denial of Scripture's truth (as measured by the original intent). (Cf. also the traditional Lutheran hermeneutics of the apocalyptic literature.)

17. The question of "how far" is an important one. Even if the Lutheran Confessions as taken seriously did not provide a sufficient answer to these problems, two major criteria may be advanced: (1) that of presuppositions (cf. #2: the evidence of "faith"), and (2) "by their fruits shall ye know them," i.e., any application must be rejected which results in simple moralism (some aspects of Bultmanism), a denial of the basic historical matrices of the revelation (Exodus, exile, incarnation, resurrection, etc.), a relativization of all truth, etc. Until very cogent evidence is available in one direction or the other, we doubt that greater specificity is possible, i.e., both viewpoints will have to be viewed as hypothetical, and responsible exegetical freedom will have to be permitted. If the method is thus used conservatively, we feel certain that no doctrines of the Lutheran Church will be at stake. That the line between exegetical and doctrinal differences cannot be drawn more sharply is really nothing new; we have always attempted to distinguish the basic from the peripheral (cf. resurrection vs. John the Baptist's "faith"). Any hermeneutics may be abused (the ancient literalism just as much as the contemporary historico-critical method); we shall continue to insist on correct use, as always.

Of course, as we recognize the constant trend of earlier dogmatics to become precise beyond Scriptural warrant, we must beware of the opposite extreme. It may be pointed out, however, that with the near-universal acceptance of the historico-critical method, modern Christendom has probably achieved far greater unanimity in the interpretation of Scripture than at any other time since the Reformation when more literalistic methodologies were in vogue--so obvious is the main thrust of the Biblical documents (= perspicuitas).

18. Modern accents on "myth" are to be understood as a species of anthropomorphism or theologoumenon, without which it would simply be impossible for God to communicate to man. Just as God's nature must be described anthropomorphically ("hear, smell, sit," etc.) without any concern whether this is literalistically true, so the supra-historical framework in which the historical revelation is set must be described in analogy (of course, of the writer's own time); thus heaven-"new Jerusalem," all eschatology in the nature of the case almost merges with apocalyptic; the "truth" of creation must be described in supra-historical forms, etc. The basically anthropomorphic character of all theology is not diminished by even the most philosophic or sophisticated expression. And usually we must admit that no modern "myth" will express the inexpressible truths of revelation any better than those employed in Scripture. For us to trace their origin and genesis (even in the "praeparatio evangelica" of paganism) is not to deprecate their truth. And for us to say that they are supra-historical implies not the slightest doubt of that which they report (cf. resurrection, ascension). In fact, myth is of indispensable value in universalizing the particulars of revelatory history; like poetry, it expresses a truth which no literal prose ever can.

The Biblical meaning attached to the symbols is based on the prophetic and apostolic interpretation of history; man's experience of God's ways in history gives him an analogy for concretizing his faith in the supra-history when the same Lord of history will finally consummate all His activity in history.

Many Bultmanite applications of demythologization are certainly to be rejected, but we cannot dodge the questions he has raised. Thus the skandalon of Christianity is to be measured against the Biblical, not the modern environment (cf. perhaps the Biblical world-view, plagues as divine visitation, demonic possession, miracle, ascension, sacrifice, etc.). However, we must reject Bultman's axiom that myth has only anthropological, not cosmological, value; the symbol dare not be divorced from the reality it represents (in the constant fashion of antiquity); etc.

19. Espousal of the historico-critical method by no means involves acceptance of its extremes and excrescences (abusus non tollit usum), most of which have become fairly obvious today, even to practitioners of the method who have few theological concerns, and most of which have been (and still are being) corrected in the course of time (historicism, concern with detail as an end rather than a means, etc.) Among contemporary practitioners of the method whom, it seems to us, Lutherans might well emulate (on the whole) we may mention most modern Roman Catholic exegetes (deVaux, McKenzie; cf. CBQ), Bright, G. E. Wright, Filson, Schniewind, etc.

20. Thus, the historico-critical method teaches us again what it means "to live by faith alone" (i.e., not sight or rational proof), at the same time that it gives us an invaluable key to the original intent and thus also to the contemporary interpretation and application of Scripture. It enhances our appreciation of the magnitude of God's condescension, climaxing in the incarnation of His Son. And it enables the Church today

better to interpret contemporary events as part of the same historical process recorded in Scripture leading up to the great eschatological denouement.

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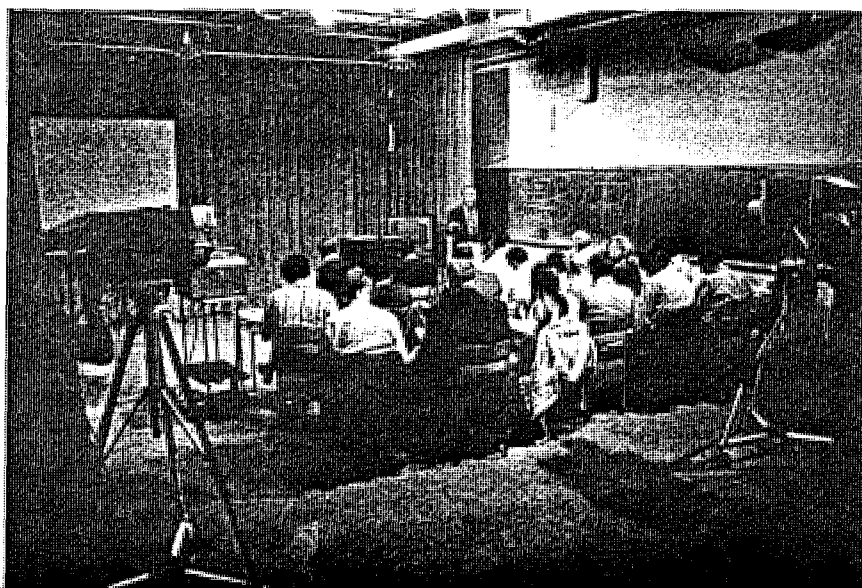
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Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis. (diploma, 1907); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (diploma, 1910); University of Alberta, Canada (B. A., 1916; M. A., 1918); St. Stephen Theological College, Edmonton (B.D., 1919); graduate work at University of Toronto University of Wisconsin, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., and Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind. (LL. D., 1947); pastor, Trinity, Pincher Creek, Alta., Canada (1910-14 St. Peter's, Edmonton, Alta., Canada (1914-22); professor, Concordia College, Edmonton (1922-28); president, St. John's College, Winfield, Kans. (1928-36); professor, Concordia Seminary (1936-65); director of graduate studies (1944-54).

WALTER R. ROEHRS, Ph. D., D. D.

Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis. (diploma, 1920); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (diploma, 1925); University of Chicago (M. A., 1926; Ph. D., 1934); Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. (D. D., 1963); pastor, Grace, Western Springs, Ill. (1926-30); professor, St. Paul's College, Concordia, Mo. (1930-41); professor, Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill. (1941-44); professor, Concordia Seminary (1944-68); managing editor of *Concordia Theological Monthly* (1954-64).

PHILIP J. SCHROEDER, M. A.

Lutheran Theological Seminary, Wauwatosa, Wis. (diploma, 1923); New Mexico Highlands University (B. A., 1949; M. A., 1949); instructor at Highlands University (1948); University of Oregon (1949-51); Washington University, St. Louis (1957-); pastor, Trinity, Marshfield, Wis. (1923-42); service center pastor (1942-43); U. S. Army Chaplain (1943-46); pastor, Immanuel, Las Vegas, N. Mex. (1946-49); Trinity, La Junta, Colo. (1950-53); instructor, Concordia Seminary (1953-57); assistant professor (1957-69).

LEWIS WM. SPITZ, Ph. D., D. D.

Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Ind. (diploma, 1915); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (diploma, 1918); Washington University, St. Louis (M. A., 1930); University of Colorado, Boulder, Colo. (SS, 1930, '31, '32); University of Chicago (Ph. D., 1943); Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. (D. D., 1964); pastor, St. John's, Lovell, Wyo. (1918-21); St. Paul's, Bertrand, Neb. (1921-24); Trinity, Blue Hill, Neb. (1924-25); professor, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (1925-46); professor, Concordia Seminary (1946-71).

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. Edgar Krentz
5433 S. Ridgewood Ct.
Chicago, IL 60615

Dear Dr. Krentz:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I have chosen as a topic for my senior church history paper: "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." I remember reading somewhere that Dr. Martin Scharlemann introduced the historical critical method to St. Louis when he began teaching there in 1952, and that you learned it from him when you began teaching in 1953. Is this true Dr. Krentz? As a fellow Christian, I do not want to write anything in my paper that will defame or injure your good name. What I am asking YOU to do is to use the self-addressed, stamped envelope and write back with your answers and insight to the questions I have raised. I am asking you to give your account of what happened at St. Louis in the exegetical department during the years you taught there. Since my paper is due at the beginning of April, I would appreciate a reply within a month. A man of your academic credentials taking time out from a busy schedule to help a seminary student is greatly appreciated! May the Lord of the church bless you in your ministry.

Yours and His,

Joel L. Pless

Joel L. Pless

**Lutheran School of Theology
at Chicago**

Tel: (312) 753-0752

1100 East 55th St.
Chicago, Illinois
60615-5199

20 January 1986

Mr. Joel L. Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle, 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Re: Your letter postmarked 15 January

Dear Mr. Pless:

I received your letter asking for information about the introduction of the historical critical method into the classrooms of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

I have now been removed from the unfortunate controversy in the LCMS for a decade, and from the early years of teaching at Concordia Seminary [St. Louis] by over thirty years. At this time both my interests and time are devoted to other topics in biblical studies. For that reason I will not use the opportunity to respond to your questions about Missouri Synod history.

There is quite a bit of material in the public domain. You would probably find more at the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis. You might ask them for a copy of "Notes on the valid use of the Historical Critical Method" by Martin H. Scharlemann and Horace Hummel, presented to the faculty about 1955 and redistributed to the faculty about 5 years later.

Cordially yours,



Edgar Krentz
Christ Seminary--Seminex
Professor of New Testament

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Professor Daniel Moriarity
419 Pine Brae Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Dear Professor Moriarity:

Greetings to you from Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my senior church history paper on how the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Through my research, I have nearly come to the conclusion that Professor Martin Scharlemann learned elements of the historical critical method while attending the Princeton Theological Institute during the summer of 1949 and that he introduced the historical critical method to Concordia soon after he arrived in 1952. Is this true, or is there more to it than that?

Most of the professors here believe Dr. Scharlemann remained a closet historical critic the rest of his life. Can you shed any light on that accusation? Undoubtedly you had him for a professor. Was he orthodox when you had him? I have also found evidence that Edgar Krentz, Frederick Danker, and Ralph Klein were among the most blatant proponents of the historical critical method when you were a student at St. Louis, 1970-1974. Is this true?

What I am asking YOU to do is use the self-addressed, stamped envelope and write back and give me your valuable insight on the questions I have raised. Since my paper is due in April, I would appreciate a reply within a month. I know you are busy working on your doctorate in Near Eastern studies, so please write back when you have time.

Everything is fine here at the seminary. David Sweet is now pastor of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church, La Crosse, WI. Jim and Martha Sherod are now living in Houston, Texas. They will be returning to Mequon this summer. (Jim was not sure if he wanted to be a pastor, so he took a couple years off). Luke Biggs is associate pastor at Immanuel, Cedarburg, a couple miles up the road from me. He is doing fine, married, two children. All three of your former students here are/were among the top students in their classes. You and Paul Raabe taught us well. My now month old Christmas letter should let you know what I have been doing since I left Ann Arbor. Your taking time out to help a former student is greatly appreciated! Give my kind regards to your wife Linda, Danny, and Becky.

Yours and His

Joel L. Pless
Joel L. Pless

1. *Staphylococcus aureus* 2. *Staphylococcus epidermidis* 3. *Staphylococcus saprophyticus* 4. *Staphylococcus sciuri* 5. *Staphylococcus carnosus* 6. *Staphylococcus* sp.

Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2743. The following information was obtained from the records of the Michigan Department of Transportation, dated 1/1/1988.

There were about 2000 people in the crowd and the atmosphere was very festive.

...and I ... and I ... to ...

at one time Dr. Scharlemann did circulate papers in our synod

going in the historical-critical method on the campus of Conco

number correctly -- was due to the encouragement given by the (t

way. I have never seen these papers, since Dr. Scharlemann stole

90. 73 46 19 90 19 216

19062 100,000 per cent

Wrong in saying that there was no crucifixion theology in the Gospels, for which he gave me a grade of "B" saying I proved my point, but the paper was too short. Dr. Klein was a typical liberal, not only in theology but also in politics. In my honors course in the Latter Prophets, he said Matthew was "wrong" in saying that Isaiah 7:14 applied to Jesus. In our discussion about Amos, the only application he could make was for the war in Vietnam, although I questioned this in class. In another class (Ugaritic), he jokingly said that when Adam swung off the tree and walked upright for the first time, he probably spoke Proto-Semitic (I was told that he was a proponent of the so-called theistic evolutionary hypothesis). There have been efforts to identify these professors with the transcripts in the "Blue" book published by Pres. Preus. I never have found out how reliable those identifications were. Well, this is just a very brief rambling answer to your letter. I still think that if you would talk to Dr. Suell

Rev. Daniel T. Moriarty

Hebrew at the seminar in 1974-75. I cannot remember any support given for the historical-critical method. In fact, teaching in the classroom, not in private conversations. I also knew him as my division chairman when I taught Greek 5. The typical answer of a higher critic. I really have to say that I never experienced any skepticism of doctrine in his (spirit) which version of the parable he would use in his gospel. This seemed to me to be a fair answer, and certainly not have told these parables repeatedly, in more than one setting, and it was left to the evangelist regarded by the Holy giving the usual liberal answer that there were more inventions of the early church. Rather, he argued that Jesus had to excellent. When some students talked about the differences between the gospel accounts of the same parables, instead of the far as my personally hearing any such teaching from him. I only had one course with him on the Parables. It was

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. Ewald J. Otto
712 Kenwood
Quincy, IL 62310

Dear Dr. Otto:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. My parents and I have been dedicated readers of Affirm since we became deeply concerned about the doctrinal problems in the Missouri Synod over a decade ago. We are now members of the Wisconsin Synod. In the latest issue of Affirm, dated December 1985, you write: "We appreciate your comments even when you disagree with us. We do our best to answer you honestly and forthrightly. We try not to let any mail go unanswered." Since you were bold enough to put that last sentence in print, Dr. Otto, I am now going to hold you to it!

I am writing my senior church history paper on the topic: "How the historical critical method was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through my research, I have nearly come to the conclusion that Professor Martin Scharlemann learned elements of the historical critical method while he was studying at Princeton in the summer of 1949, and that he introduced the historical critical method to the classrooms of St. Louis soon after he began teaching there in 1952. Is this true, Dr. Otto? Since you have been a member of the seminary board of control for a number of years, I believe you can give me some valuable insight to the questions I have raised, or at least point me in the right direction to find the answers. Any of your comments on the whole Seminex "affair" I would find exceedingly valuable. Please use the enclosed self addressed stamped envelope in sending your reply.

After reading Exodus from Concordia, I can only admire you for the firm stand you and your colleagues on the board of control took for confessional Lutheranism against the faculty majority. Perhaps this is the first time you have ever corresponded with someone in the Wisconsin Synod. I hope your opinion of our synod is a favorable one.

Since my paper is due at the beginning of April, I would appreciate a reply within a month. I know you are very busy, so please write when you have time. Thank you for taking time out from your busy schedule to help a seminary student with his studies. May our Epiphany king keep you in his care.

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel L. Pless
Joel L. Pless



"I believed,
and therefore have
I spoken"
2 Cor. 4:13

c/o Walther Memorial Lutheran Church
4040 West Fond du Lac Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53216

Rev. E. J. OTTO
712 KENWOOD
QUINCY, ILLINOIS 62301

Jan. 30

Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117N
Mequon, WI 53092

Fellow hod carrier in the Lord's building project.....

Your (undated) letter came a few days ago. The AFFIRM mail runs fairly heavy, I answer it all, and do my own dubious typing (saves overhead). I need to average five to seven letters a day out of here in order to keep even, as it were. So answers must be as short as a garrulous old man can make them!

Ergo, to horse:

1. At Missouri's synodical convention in 1973 the election of layman Al Briel and myself gave the school's Board of Regents a slim 6-5 conservative majority. Previously there was a liberal majority. We were thus able to follow up on some crucial doctrinal resolutions which resulted, 14 months later, in the removal of the seminary president Tietjen. Meanwhile, 45 walk-out striking profs were fired for not working. They, of course, all subscribed to Tietjen's doctrinal (historical-critical) position. But it was fortunate that we didn't have to deal with each one as an individual case. We'd still be at it!

2. But, while at the very center of those agonizing and gut-wrenching days, I had no time--believe me--to go into the historical questions of how the faculty got where it was. However, I can make a few points and point you to some other sources.

3. In 1973 I was told that the beginnings of the liberal theology at the Sem went back some 30 years or so. This would take you beyond Dr. Scharlemann and 1952. Parenthetically, I'll say what you probably know, namely that Dr. Scharlemann (Martin that is. There's a liberal Robert) came--thank God--to a full turn and was a leader among the faithful five who took the Sem and its problems to the then new synodical president, Dr. J.A.O. Preus. Scharlemann's days as acting president, following the suspension of Tietjen, were crucial to the successful return of the school to the old paths.

4. How far back ahead of 1952 do the h-c beginnings go? Can they be pinned to one person? I doubt it. You have read Exodus from Concordia. Good. Now--if you don't have it--get Prof. Kurt Marquart's 170-page book, Anatomy of an Explosion. It deals with the doctrinal issues and

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10

goes back to European roots of liberalism, then to development in the U.S., and finally into the Missouri Synod. The book was published in 1977. The forward says it can be bought from the Ft. Wayne Sem bookstore for a mere \$1. I trust that still ~~holds~~ holds true.

Write to:

Concordia Theo. Seminary Press
6600 N. Clinton
Ft. Wayne, Indiana 46825.

That book is a must for you and your church history paper.

5. One other bit of help: Dr. John Klotz is head of the Graduate School at our St. Louis Sem. He has an amazing memory and a historical bent of mind. Also, he's close to some of the retired profs who were there at the time of the walk-out. All of which is to say I'm taking the liberty of forwarding your letter to him and also a copy of this letter of mine. I'm sure he'll be of help with your specific question, namely, "How the historical critical method was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary St. Louis."

Given my ignorance of the background, I'll still be bold enough to say that I feel that your answer (thus far) as given in the second paragraph of your letter to me is far too simplistic. It was cooking way ahead of Scharlemann.

Cordially,

Copy to Dr. John Klotz

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'E. J. O.' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that extends to the right.

Concordia Seminary

801 DE MUN AVENUE SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI 63105

TELEPHONE: (314) 721-5934

SCHOOL FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

February 4, 1986

Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dear Joel,

Dr. Otto has asked that I respond to your letter of January 30. I am glad to do so.

There were concerns expressed over the theology of the faculty at Concordia Seminary beginning in 1945. At the 1950 convention a number of overtures (Memorials) referred to what was being taught at the St. Louis Seminary. In addition there were three specific memorials asking that the doctrinal position of members of the faculty and what was being taught at Concordia Seminary St. Louis be investigated by the Synod. As you know Dr. Scharlemann joined the faculty in September 1952. It is clear that at least a mild form of historical criticism had begun some years before that time. The concerns did not begin only after he joined the faculty.

I don't recall when I first became acquainted with Dr. Scharlemann. I suspect it was very shortly after he began his teaching at Concordia Seminary. At the time I was a member of the faculty of Concordia College River Forest. He was chairman of the Committee on Scholarly Research which sponsored the production of my book, "Genes, Genesis and Evolution." Subsequently I became a member of that committee, and I got to know Dr. Scharlemann quite well. I believe it is fair to say that he became enamored of historical criticism, and there is little doubt that he referred to its techniques and procedures in his teaching. I shared some of the concerns that the sainted Dr. Becker had regarding some of the materials he wrote (I assume you had the privilege of knowing Dr. Becker) Dr. Scharlemann and I still remained good friends. My theological position was that of Dr. Becker, not that of Dr. Scharlemann.

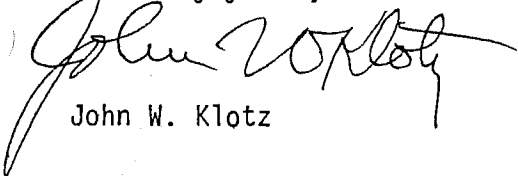
Subsequently, Dr. Scharlemann apologized to the synodical convention for the problems which his papers raised, and he withdrew them. I don't believe that at that time he was convinced his approach was wrong, but he certainly did admit that it was confusing, misleading, and easily misunderstood.

Dr. Scharlemann later became one of the champions of orthodox Lutheranism. In the 70's he began to speak out publicly and to warn against the dangers of historical criticism. He was particularly concerned with the fact that it was being presented at Concordia Seminary. It was Dr. Scharlemann who requested President Preus to institute an investigation of the theology being presented at Concordia Seminary. He was the leader of the faithful five who stood in opposition to the faculty majority. I got to know him very well during those crisis-filled days and was in day to day contact with him after I joined the faculty in 1974. I can only say that he took the same position over against historical criticism as Dr. Becker did. I refer to Dr. Becker because you probably knew him. He was my next door neighbor at River Forest and a member of the same congregation that I was. Our children grew up together.

In any case Dr. Scharlemann not only cautioned against historical criticism in the classroom but publicly warned against it again and again. It is my conviction that his responsibilities as professor of New Testament exegesis drove him into the Word and that as he studied the Word he recognized that historical criticism could not be reconciled with orthodox Christianity.

I hope this will be helpful to you. We have had some difficult days in the Missouri Synod but by God's grace we have returned to the Biblical way. Dr. Otto, the members of our Board of Regents, and AFFIRM, which Dr. Otto represents, played an important part in that return.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John W. Klotz", with a stylized, flowing script.

John W. Klotz

JWK:la

cc Dr. Otto

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Professor Carl Lawrenz
494 Grove Street
Lomira, WI 53048

Dear Professor Lawrenz:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. I am writing my senior church history paper on how the historical critical method entered into the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Since I will be in Lomira this Friday afternoon, January 31st, visiting a teacher at St. John Lutheran School, may I stop at your house at 2:00 PM and ask you a few questions about my topic? I want to know especially about how Alfred von Rohr Sauer, Walter Wegner, Gilbert Thiele, and Philip Schroeder became historical critics. I think if anyone would know it would be you.

I hope to find you at home Friday afternoon. If you cannot be home, feel free to call me collect anytime after six in the evening, so we can arrange to meet another time. My phone number is (414) - 258-2439. Thank you for your time.

Yours and His,

Joel L. Pless

Joel L. Pless

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Rev. Dr. Lorenz Wunderlich
2072 Kiwi Court
Oviedo, FL 32765

Dear Dr. Wunderlich:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, WI. I am writing my senior church history paper on how the historical critical method entered into the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Through my research, I have nearly come to the conclusion that Professor Martin Scharlemann learned elements of the historical critical method while he was attending summer school at Princeton in 1949. When he began teaching at St. Louis in 1952, he then began teaching in his classes the historical critical method. One other source I read speaks of Professor Edgar Krentz as learning the historical critical method from Dr. Scharlemann at St. Louis. All this happened supposedly in the early 1950's. Is any of this true Dr. Wunderlich? Since you began teaching at St. Louis in 1953, I believe you will be able to offer some valuable insight on the questions I have raised. Since you were one of the members of the faculty ^{minority} ~~majority~~, you and your colleagues will always be held in high esteem by the faculty and students of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for your stand for confessional Lutheranism. In answering my letter, please use the self addressed stamped envelope which is enclosed. Since my paper is due in early April, I would appreciate a reply within a month. I hope to hear from you soon, may the Lord keep you in his care in your retirement.

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel L. Pless
Joel L. Pless

February 8, 1986
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. J. A. O. Preus
Route 1
Garfield, AR 72731

Dear Dr. Preus:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. You and I met when I was still a boy at St. John Lutheran Church, Rochester, Michigan, formerly my home congregation. You also preached at the dedication service of my high school, Lutheran High North, and at my college graduation, Concordia, Ann Arbor.

I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical critical method entered the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence I have been told that Drs. Alfred Fuerbringer and Arthur Repp were the ones who instigated bringing the historical critical method into the classroom teaching at St. Louis in the early 1950's, and that Dr. Martin Scharlemann was an early proponent of it. Do you know if any of this is true, Dr. Preus? I would think you would be in a position to know.

What I am kindly asking YOU to do is to use the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope to write back and answer the questions I have raised, or at least point me in the right direction to find the answers. I know you are busy translating a work by Martin Chemnitz, so please write when you have the time. My paper is due in April, so I would appreciate an answer within a month. A man of your credentials taking time out to help a WELS seminary student with his studies is greatly appreciated.

Yours and His, in the
spirit of the old Synodical
Conference.

Joel L. Pless
Joel L. Pless

February 8, 1986
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. J. A. O. Preus
Route 1
Garfield, AR 72731

Dear Dr. Preus:

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What I am kindly asking YOU to do is to use the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope to write back and answer the questions I have raised, or at least point me in the right direction to find the answers. I know you are busy translating a work by Martin Chemnitz, so please write when you have the time. My paper is due in April, so I would appreciate an answer within a month. A man of your credentials taking time out to help a WELS seminary student with his studies is greatly appreciated.

Yours and His, in the
spirit of the old Synodical
Conference,

Joel L. Pless
Joel L. Pless

Dear Joel - It was nice to hear from you.
I'll do the best I can - Furb. & Rupp as pres &
dean of the Sem lived many yrs who either favored
or permitted the H.C. method: I am sure they
personally accepted it: they were probably
encouraged to do so by Schafermann & others.
Schafermann delivered several papers in
Synod supporting the H.C.M., but was compelled
to apologize for disturbing the church. I was
there at the 1862 Cleveland Convention: I
was there & heard the whole thing & I do not
know if I ever changed his mind, but
he was changed man after that time
time & by 1869 was actively opposing the
his old colleague & the theology they
espoused. So I played a role in introducing
the H.C.M. but he was not solely responsible
so he later opposed it. At the time of the
work-out all the exiles to my knowledge
held the view & the rest of the faculty
either held it or permitted it. Thank
God all that has changed.

Hope this helps
Sincerely

Jim Mur

February 8, 1986
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. August Suelflow
Director, Concordia Historical Institute
801 De Mun Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63105

Dear Dr. Suelflow:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my senior church history paper on how the historical critical ^{method} entered the teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Through previous correspondence, I was instructed to write to you and request on loan the paper: "Notes on the valid use of the Historical Critical Method," by Martin Scharlemann and Horace Hummel. Is it possible for you to send me this paper on loan? I would be happy to pay postage or copying costs. If you could list any other sources to help me find further information on my topic, I would greatly appreciate it.

My paper is due in April, so I would appreciate a reply as soon as possible. Please use the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Thank you for taking time out from your busy schedule to help a seminary student. May our Lenten king bless you in your work

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel L. Pless

Joel L. Pless



Concordia Historical Institute

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

801 DE MUN AVENUE ESTABLISHED 1847 • INCORPORATED 1927 ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63105
Tel. No. 314-721-5934 sta. 320



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Director

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26 March 86

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Joseph B. Wilson
John C. Zimmermann

Joel L. Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N.
Mequon, WI 53092

Reply to your request of 6 Mar 86
Re: Scharlemann papers

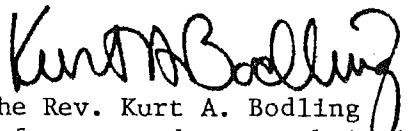
Dear Mr. Pless,

We are pleased to enclose the response of our Research Department to your request addressed to us on 6 Mar 86, and we gratefully acknowledge the receipt of \$1.75 as payment of the service charge. We also appreciate your patience.

If you have not yet become a member of the Concordia Historical Institute, please thoughtfully consider the invitation in the brochure. Only as more people with interests like yours become personally involved in preserving and researching Lutheran history will we have the resources to improve the quality of our services.

Finally, if you have any questions about the report enclosed, please feel free to write us. We are thankful for this opportunity to be of service to you.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Kurt A. Bodling
Reference and Research Assistant

I hope the enclosed material is pertinent to your needs and sufficient for your paper. CHI would be pleased to receive a copy of your work if you desire. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rev. Mark J. Schreiber
Coord. of Ref. Services

111 Delrex Blvd.
Georgetown, Ontario
L7G 4C5
CANADA

Dear Joel!

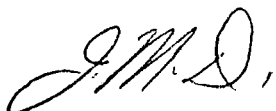
Greetings in the Lord. Thank you for your letter of Feb. 9, which reached me today. I am glad that things are going well for you. The only thought that mars your letter is that you may be taken in by the WELS false doctrine on church and ministry. But since you have followed my articles in CN I will not belabor that point now. I remember you fondly from Ann Arbor, and am glad that all is well with you.

I am returning the envelope you sent me, as US postage is not valid in Canada or on mail coming from Canada. That will not be a problem for me for long, as I have accepted a call to be pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, R.R. #1, Box 57, Bluffs, Illinois, 62621. Since we are moving next week, God willing, I do not have time to give you a longer answer now.

In addition to the sources you mentioned, the only thing I could suggest is that you go into old issues of the Concordia Theological Monthly to see the progress of false doctrine among the seminary professors. Carl S. Meyer's Log Cabin to Luther Tower you will already know about, as well as Moving Frontiers, also edited by Meyer. You might also write to LCMS pastor Tom Baker in University City, Missouri (he might have moved). He has done some work on it. The only other suggestion would be personal interviews with the people involved. But I doubt that many of them would be ready to talk to you at this time. You could ask Prof. Moriarity from Ann Arbor for other suggestions. Anything more I would say would really only be hear-say.

Must hurry now. May you have a blessed Lent for Jesus' sake. It is my prayer that the conservatives in LCMS will soon be leaving and that doctrinal unanimity with WELS may be found--truly returning to the teachings found in the Brief Statement. But that means that WELS would have to give up the J.P. Koehler doctrinal innovations on church and ministry. Sorry to harp on that issue--but it is in everyone's best interests to have it settled.

Yours in Christ,



John M. Drickamer

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

March 9, 1986

Rev. A. T. Kretzmann
2182 N. 57th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208

Dear Pastor Kretzmann:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon. I am writing my church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Since you and your congregation in Crete, Illinois were among the first to call for an investigation of the St. Louis faculty, I think it would be very valuable for me if I could interview you on this subject.

I am planning to interview Rev. Curtis Peterson of Resurrection Lutheran Church on this subject at 2:00 PM, this Thursday afternoon, March 13, 1986. May I stop in at your house around 4:00 PM on that same afternoon to interview you on my church history paper topic? I will only take a maximum of one hour of your time. If you cannot be home on Thursday afternoon, please feel free to call me at 242-2439 or 242-7202 anytime after 1:00 PM, or feel free to leave me a note at your home. Perhaps then we could arrange for another time to meet. I hope to see you Thursday afternoon around 4:00 PM.

Yours and His,

Joel Pless
Joel Pless

March 11, 1987

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon. WI 53092

Dr. John Tietjen
1700 E. 56th Street
Chicago. IL 60637

Dear Dr. Tietjen:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." In order to be fair to you and your colleagues, I am now asking you to take time out from your busy schedule and give me a brief account of how you believe the historical critical method was introduced at St. Louis.

Is it true, Dr. Tietjen, that Drs. Alfred Fuerbringer and Arthur Repp were the first ones who brought in professors who taught the historical critical method? I was told this through previous correspondence. Is it also true that you were specially chosen as president of St. Louis to continue this practice when Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer retired?

As a fellow Christian, I do not want to write anything in my church history paper that would injure your good name. All I am kindly asking you to do is to write me back using the self-addressed stamped envelope and give me what you believe is the truth about the questions I have raised, or at least direct me to some sources to find the answers. Since my paper is due the second week in April, I would appreciate a reply within a week or two. A man of your credentials taking time out from a busy schedule to help a seminary student is greatly appreciated! May our Lenten King keep you in his care.

Yours and His,

Joel Pless

Joel Pless



Christ Seminary Semínex

March 18, 1986

Mr. Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, Wisconsin 53092

Dear Mr. Pless:

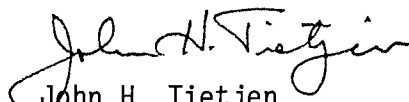
I have received your letter and wish you God's blessings as you prepare for the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall be brief and direct in response to your letter. No; Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were not "the first ones who brought in professors who taught the historical critical method." During my time as a student at Concordia Seminary (1948-1953), I learned the historical critical method in the classrooms of the now sainted William Arndt, Paul Bretscher, Martin Franzmann, and George Schick. That was before Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were in positions of leadership.

No; I was not "specially chosen as president of St. Louis to continue this practice." I can't tell you why I was chosen, nor can anyone else, because the Electors who did the choosing (including the now sainted Dr. Oliver Harms and Dr. Herman Scherer) never stated their reasons. No one was more surprised than I by their choice.

To answer a question you didn't ask, I did not go to Concordia Seminary with a program of advancing the historical-critical method. I went to carry out my ordination vow to be faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Yours in Christ,


John H. Tietjen
President

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

March 11, 1986

Rev. Dr. Robert Preus
1 Coverdale Pl.
Fort Wayne, IN 46825

Dear Dr. Preus:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am a classmate and good friend of John Schmidt, Rick Hawes, and Dave Erber, from Concordia, Ann Arbor. I also graduated from Lutheran High North when Albert Wingfield was the principal there. I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation entered the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis."

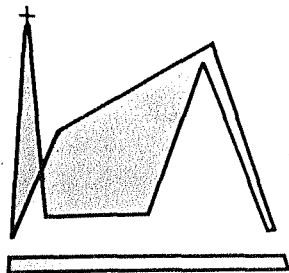
Through previous correspondence (with E. J. Otto, Daniel Moriarity, your brother Jack, and others) I have been informed that the beginnings of the historical critical method at St. Louis go back to the 1940's. Drs. Alfred Fuerbringer and Arthur Repp have been listed as being the two men responsible for bringing men to the St. Louis faculty who taught the historical critical method. Since you began teaching at St. Louis in 1957, can you shed any light on this situation, Dr. Preus?

What I am asking you to do is to use the self-addressed stamped envelope and write back to me and tell me about your personal experiences about when you realized some of your colleagues on the St. Louis faculty were teaching the historical critical method. I know you are a very busy man, so please write back when you have the time. Since my paper is due in the middle of April, I would appreciate a reply in about two weeks. A man of your credentials taking time out to help a seminary student with his studies is greatly appreciated. May our Lenten King keep you and yours in his care.

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel Pless
Joel Pless

P. S. Your friend and former student, Rev. Curtis Peterson, sends you his cordial greetings. The Lord is richly blessing him in his new ministry at Resurrection Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Office of the President

Concordia Theological Seminary

6600 N. Clinton St. / Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825-4996 / (219) 482-9611

April 2, 1986

Mr. Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle, 117 N.
Mequon, WI 53092

Dear Mr. Pless:

Please forgive me for not answering your letter sooner. I had your envelope at home and your letter here at the office, and I never got them together until yesterday. I hope this answer will not come too late for you.

As one who was at the St. Louis seminary from 1957 until 1974, during which time the historical-critical method was brought into the seminary, I think I can answer your question with a good deal of authority, probably as much as anyone alive.

First of all, both Fuerbringer and Repp had nothing to do with actually promoting the historical-critical method. Neither was an exegete and neither read enough in that area to know even what the historical-critical method was. But Fuerbringer, in order to build up the school, as he thought, and Repp because he was a bit liberal in his openness to all kinds of new exegetical "insights," did promote professors who did teach the method. The first meeting I ever attended among the faculty was the fall retreat in 1957. It was at that meeting that Martin Scharlemann stood up before the entire faculty and declared that the Bible, which is true, "contains errors." The reaction from men like Franzmann, Roehrs, Spitz, J.T. Miller, Merkens, and many, many others was almost violent. He was rejected out-of-hand and the younger liberal men who were already there, like Krentz, sat sedately quiet during the discussion. But Scharlemann was undaunted and went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques, but never actually endorsing the method or even talking much about it. It was his colleagues at the time, Krentz, Fred Danker, and then later Klein and Ehlen and Smith and Casey Jones, and many others in the exegetical and other departments, including Sauer and Wegner (Wisconsin men) who endorsed the method and brought it into full use at the seminary. Scharlemann saw what was happening, drew back, and even repudiated his colleagues in a most forthright way, totally typical of his approach to all issues. The method being totally endorsed and put in action by the exegetical department was then defended by the faculty as such, except for four or five of us including Scharlemann and four men in

Mr. Joel Pless
April 2, 1986
Page 2

the systematics department (Bohlmann was not around much in those days). We who opposed the method were hopelessly outnumbered and had rather little effect upon the students in terms of numbers. However, we had a very profound effect upon some of the students who are now teaching at this seminary and who are out in the field. I am sure a good half of the students never knew what the historical-critical method was, because they were deliberately never told anything about what it is by their professors. The method was merely extolled and the results of the method were the "assured results of modern scholarship."

About 1974 Scharlemann, I, and others wrote a special issue of Affirm which I will try to get hold of and send to you. These are the arguments we made against the method, specifically against those in our circles who were employing it. These articles will tell you exactly how the method was adopted and defended and regarded by the more liberal colleagues. Everyone of these more liberal colleagues is now out of the Missouri Synod.

Please give my regards to the Rev. Curtis Peterson. He is a great friend of mine.

Sincerely yours, in Christ,



Robert Preus
President

RP:dm

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

March 11, 1986

Rev. Herman Otten
c/o Christian News
Box 168
New Haven, MO 63068

Dear Rev. Otten:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence, I have been informed that Arthur Repp and Alfred Fuerbringer were the instigators in calling men to the St. Louis faculty who were proponents of the H-C method, and that Jaroslav Pelikan and Martin Scharlemann were the first professors to begin teaching the H-C method at St. Louis. Is this true Rev. Otten? You certainly would be in a position to know. The very existence of your newspaper proves that!

What I am asking YOU to do is to perhaps xerox some of your classnotes and/or other papers which show who was teaching the historical critical method at St. Louis when you were a student. Since I am ordering a Beck Bible, you can include the enclosures in the same package with the Bible. I think that is legal. Any of your own personal comments about the whole "H-C method situation" at St. Louis would be greatly appreciated. I am sending along \$15.00 for the AAT and the photocopies. Keep anything that is left over as my gift.

My church history professor, Prof. Martin Westerhaus, told us in class that you and Christian News are the modern day equivalents of Ernest Hengstenberg and his Evangelische Kirchenzeitung. I and my parents have been avid readers of Christian News for years. We were LCMS but now we are WELS. We have fitted in so well in the Wisconsin Synod that it is now hard to believe we were ever Missouri Synod in the first place!

We have three former LCMS pastors at Mequon right now who are taking third quarter classes with the seniors. They are all doing fine. Rev. Curtis Peterson was my evangelism field work supervisor last fall. I made a courtesy call on him last week. He is doing just fine, but his large congregation keeps him busy.

We at the Mequon seminary do not always like what we read in CN, but believe me, Rev. Otten, we always read it! Every Monday, after Isaiah II class, I race downstairs to the mailroom to read my copy of CN. Keep publishing your paper, Rev. Otten. If you don't expose the brazen apostasy in the LCMS, who will? I promise when I get my call, I'll always pay for my subscription of CN. Call Day for us is May 20, graduation is May 30. I'll let you know where I get sent.

Since my church history paper is due the second week in April, I would appreciate a reply ASAP. I know you are very busy, especially during Lent. I hope I can have the privilege of meeting you and your fine family in person someday. You taking time out to help a WELS sem student is appreciated!

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel Pless
Joel Pless

Enclosures

P. S. Please consider this personal correspondence between me and you, and not a letter for the CN "Forum."

Dear Mr. Pless:

Many thanks for your letter of March 11.

The sections on Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Seminex, ELIM, LCMS in the Christian News Encyclopedia should give you plenty of information. Also check our Christian Handbook on Vital Issues and the News & Views series on "What is Troubling The Lutherans?" published by the Church League of America. Also The books of Documentation published by The State of the Church Conference. These contain some of the controversial essays. They were published in 1960 and 61. They should be in your library at the sem.

Another source of information would be the back issues of CN. I assume they are in your sem library.

God's richest blessings,

Gene Celler

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

March 19, 1986

Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer
4125 Quail Drive
Norman, OK 73072

Dear Dr. Fuerbringer:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence, I have been told third hand that you and Dr. Arthur Repp were the two men responsible for bringing professors to St. Louis who subscribed to the historical critical method. Now out of respect for the Eighth Commandment and as a fellow Christian, I am now writing you Dr. Fuerbringer, and am asking you if what I have been told is true.

What I am kindly asking you to do is write me back, using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope and tell me as you see it your role concerning the historical critical method at St. Louis. You must be over eighty years old now, so please write at your convenience. I would, however, appreciate a reply by April 7, since my paper is due soon after that. Your taking time out from your retirement to help a seminary student is greatly appreciated. May our Lenten King keep you in his care.

Yours and His,

Joel Pless
Joel Pless

PARTNERS in MISSION

Rev A O Fuerbringer
4125 Quail Dr
Norman OK 73072

ST. LOUIS, MO 63131
HOME: 314-822-2828

31 March 1986

Mr J Pless
Mequon WI

Dear Mr. Pless:

Christ is risen! Hallelujah!


Herewith I acknowledge receipt of your cordial letter of 19 March. I appreciate both what you said and how you said it and am hpppy to respond to your inquiry because it gives me the opportunity to reflect on the question after 17 years of retirement and to clarify for myself and others what the situation was as far as I was able to perceive it. I must, however ask you to excuse whatever faux pas I may make in typing. It's unpredictable.

To begin with, the term "historical critical method" needs definition because it means different things, depending on the orientation of the user. The Lutheran Cyclopedia of 1975 says (P. 384): "Historical Method (Historical Criticism). Term used to designate a variety of methods using historical research in interpreting a document." In its article on Higher Criticism the 1954 edition of the cyclopedia says: "Higher criticism has been and may be pursued legitimately" although it admits that unfortunately the majority of higher critics comes up with negative results (P. 466).

Dr. Robert Smith (formerly of Concordia Seminary, now of Pacific Lutheran School of Theology) when explaining that historical critical methodology is a tool for Biblical interpretation and can be used both negatively and positively, compared it to a hammer that can be utilized for beneficial purposes like building a house but can also be used destructively, e.g., to kill a person by hitting him over the head. One doesn't condemn the tool for what the user does with it.

In your exegetical courses you were introduced to textual criticism, I am sure. The judgment, e.g., that some of the words found in the textus receptus of the New Testament Greek were not a part of the original (cf. i John 5, 7.8.) is one form of historical criticism, based on the historical and comparative study of the various manuscripts.

Also, the judgement that some books belong to the Biblical canon and others do not (e.g., the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha) is a critical conclusion based on histotical evidence. And the same is

Committee for Mission  Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

true with regard to the text, authorship, time of composition etc. of individual Biblical books. Although the Holy Scriptures give answers to some of these questions they do so nowhere near to all.

My father, Ludwig Fuerbringer, who was a well-known and respected teacher at Concordia Seminary for over half a century (1893-1947), in his Introduction to the Old Testament (1925) has the following statements concerning the Pentateuch: "This does not imply that Moses wrote the whole work singlehanded" (P. 20); and "he undoubtedly utilized both the oral tradition authenticated by the great age of the forefathers and patriarchs and the then existing writings (ibid); also, "he likewise, no doubt, availed himself of assistants from among the priests, Levites and elders, particularly in writing the laws" (P. 21); furthermore, "Deut. 32 - 34 and perhaps also 31, 24 - 30 are to be regarded as appendages to the book" (P. 19). The English version of his Introduction was a translation of the original German text which appeared, I believe, in 1912. So, while my father held in the main to Moses's authorship of the books ascribed to him, since the early years of the century (when Franz Pieper was seminary president) father opted for oral tradition, pre-existing documents, contemporary writers and post-Mosaic materials in the Pentateuch, all this without explicit Biblical statements to support these views. They were historical critical judgments, conservatively used.

Your synod's August Pieper in his Jesaias II (which I unfortunately can't quote exactly because my copy was lost in a flood a few years ago) speaks of Postmosaica in the Pentateuch and, if my memory does not deceive me (though I may be going out on a limb) says that Is. 36 - 39 were not penned by that prophet. With regard to Ch. 40 - 66 he held that they undoubtedly were written by the Isaiah of Ch. 1 - 35, but if that were not the case they nevertheless were authored by a called and inspired prophet. Again, if this is correct, historical critical judgments, conservatively used. The book appeared, I think, in the 1920's.

So what has all this to do with the time of my presidency of Concordia Seminary (1953 - 1969)? My father and his contemporaries attended no universities or divinity schools, basing their teaching on reading and independent study. But their younger colleagues began to study elsewhere (Walter A. Maier at Harvard; Wm. Arndt at Washington/St. Louis; etc.) The latter were also quite conservative but did expand somewhat on the historical critical judgments of their seniors (e. g., Arndt with regard to Ephesians). When some of the next generation of students studied, in greater numbers and at more universities including some in Europe, they discovered that among the exponents of historical criticism there was a goodly number of sincere Bible-believing Christians, much of whose methodology could be adopted. Those in this group of Concordia graduates, plus a few Wisconsin Synod men, who were called to the seminary during my administration were all examined in my presence by a committee consisting

of the president of the synod, the president of the district, a member of the synod's board for higher education and members of the seminary board. All were found to be in agreement with the doctrinal paragraph of the synod's constitution. Where they differed in matters of interpretation from the more traditional viewpoints they were asked to consult with their older colleagues. I regret that later some of them went off the deep end, as it were, and failed to use the proper amount of moderation, patience and sound pedagogical judgment in dealing with others, especially some very conservative students, clergy and laity. Some of the latter began to use unbrotherly tactics over against some of the professors and so a controversy began and became quite heated. I don't claim to be without fault in all of this, but I maintained then and have since that during my presidency as far as I could find out none of the faculty members denied the truth and reliability of any part of the Holy Scriptures or taught contrary to the Lutheran confessions. Of course, I did not agree with all of the conclusions reached in matters of interpretation or historical criticism.

Since then a number of the men have published some very fine books of which I shall mention only one, Robert Smith's The Easter Gospels. This is a good illustration of his very helpful use of the method to set forth the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This may not be exactly what you had in mind, but I believe it necessary in order to get the full picture. Now, I'll appreciate your response. I'm tempted to ask whether I might read a copy of your paper but I realize that that may not be possible.

I wish you a blessed Easter season; a successful completion of your studies and a fruitful and rewarding ministry.

Yours in Christ,


Alfred O. Fuerbringer

March 19, 1986

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. Arthur Repp
7531 Warner
St. Louis, MO 63117

Dear Dr. Repp:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence, I have been told third hand, that you, Dr. Repp, was the man primarily responsible for bringing professors to St. Louis who subscribed to the historical-critical method. Now out of respect for the Eighth Commandment and as a fellow Christian, I am now writing you Dr. Repp and asking you if what I have been told is true.

What I am kindly asking you to do is write me back, using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope and tell me briefly as you see it your role concerning the historical critical method at St. Louis. You must be over eighty years old now, so please write at your convenience. I would, however, appreciate a reply by April 7, since my paper is due soon after that. You taking time out from your retirement to ^{help a} seminary student is greatly appreciated. May our Lenten King keep you in his care.

Yours and His,

Joel Pless

Joel Pless

March 22, 1986

Mr. Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dear Brother Joel,

Thank you for your letter of March 19 and your concern for God's will in accord with the 8th Commandment, a sometimes rare concern in church controversies.

I was academic dean at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1952 to 1972 and as such had the responsibility of recommending new faculty members to the president and from there to an electoral board who made the final choice.

Since the "historical-critical method" is defined in a variety of ways, I must assume that you define it in a manner contrary to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

One of the criteria for recommending a candidate to the faculty was his loyalty to the Confessions. I must say emphatically that no one I suggested was guilty of denying the basic tenets of the Holy Scriptures and at no time, to my knowledge, taught the historical critical method in a manner contrary to the Confessions.

Unfortunately some of the "conservative" Lutherans teach the Bible without realizing that God was often speaking to people in terms they could understand, e.g. the universe. If he had spoken of the universe in accord with today's concept they would not have understood what he was saying. Literalism often destroys the message and that is not orthodoxy.

Thank you for your concern for the truth and may you ever be a loyal Lutheran pastor upon graduation.

Sincerely in His Name.



Arthur. C. Repp



Dr. Arthur C Repp
7531 Warner
St Louis MO 63117

CANCER AT CONCORDIA

An examination of how the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and what were the subsequent effects.

Joel Pless
Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary
May 27, 1986

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PREFACE [^](#)

On the morning of February 19, 1974 an event happened at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis which not only was catastrophic for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and American Lutheranism, but also for American church history in general. On that winter morning, the vast majority of the faculty and students at Concordia Seminary staged a "walkout" to protest, among other things, the suspension of the seminary president, Dr. John Tietjen, as well as other actions of the seminary's board of control. This event, "the holy hike," as some have called it, received maximum media attention, from local church and public newspapers to the nightly network news. How could such a melodramatic and incredible event happen at a seminary where conservative confessional Lutheranism was not only the norm but also the battle cry for over a century, since its very founding?

The answer is both simple and complex. It is simple because one of the primary, if not the sole reason, why the faculty majority and most of the students walked out and off Concordia Seminary's campus that morning in February, was because they did not accept the historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation. It is complex because the primary reason for the foundation of "Seminex" became obscured in various ecclesiastical power plays between, on the one side, J. A. O. Preus, president of the Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod and the Concordia Seminary board of control, and on the other side, Seminary president John Tietjen and the majority of the St. Louis faculty members.

The historical—grammatical method of Biblical interpretation had been the sole method employed in interpreting the Bible in the Lutheran Church-

Missouri Synod until somewhere in the 1940's. It was then in the 1940's and the early 1950's that a "new" method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the LCMS. This was the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation. This method has as an underlying premise this presupposition: The Bible is not divinely inspired or inerrant but it is a product by a variety of authors of a religious community over a period of millenia. The question then is this: "How and why did an orthodox Lutheran seminary such as Concordia, St. Louis begin teaching the historical-critical method? This research monograph will conduct an investigation of how the historical-critical of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and what were its subsequent effects. This investigation will center its attention on the beginning of the liberal movement in the Missouri Synod dating back to the 1930's. The two aspects of the liberal movement within Missouri, the counter-confessional attack and the counter- Biblical attack will then be studied in relation to how they affected the instruction at St. Louis.¹ Finally by examining the contemporary writings of an increasing liberal faculty at St. Louis, it will be demonstrated convincingly how the historical-critical method not only infiltrated nearly all of the St. Louis faculty, but also had an ominous effect on a sizable portion of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Unique to this monograph will be the analogy employed to describe the historical-critical method and how it was first introduced and then spread at Concordia, St. Louis, The historical-critical method will be described and compared to a malignant growth, a cancer, that has infiltrated a healthy body. Like cancer, the historical-critical method did not attack and infect all of Concordia, St. Louis and the Missouri Synod at once. It began in minute

segment of the Missouri Synod as does most cancer which attacks the human body. But like nearly all types of cancer, the historical-critical method, so quietly introduced to the Missouri Synod at its St. Louis seminary, did not stay in one place. The teachings and influence of the historical-critical method left the faculty discussion papers and class lecture notes and influenced and changed the method of Biblical interpretation among nearly the entire faculty at St. Louis and most of their students. Like cancer, when, as it spreads, begins to negatively infect other parts of the body, the historical- critical method did not just stay in one place by changing and altering the method of Biblical interpretation at St. Louis, The new method began to change doctrines, to "reinterpret" them so that they would be more applicable to modern man and the challenges that he encounters. Added to this, the historical—critical method opened the door for an active ecumenical movement within the Missouri Synod, for such an "enlighten" method of Biblical interpretation easily explained away all the Scriptural barriers to unionism as now irrelevant to today's American church scene. In short, by the early 1970's, the historical-critical method, begun at St. Louis, had infected nearly every major institution and program of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, The writer of these lines hopes to convey to the reader by and through this monograph, that the historical-critical method, in whatever church body it infects, if it is allowed to run its natural course, will ultimately cause that church denomination to cease to exist as a Christian church body,

J. L. Pless

Mequon,
Wisconsin.

Good Friday, 1986.

CHAPTER I

A HEALTHY PATIENT WITH SOME BAD HABITS [^]

It is highly debatable when and where Missouri's troubles began with the historical-critical method. In the Abiding Word, an anthology of doctrinal essays written in commemoration of the centennial of the LCMS, articles on topics such as the "The Clearness and Sufficiency of Scripture," "The Proper Use of the Bible," "Holy Scripture the Word of God," and "Bible Interpretation," contain no evidences of an espousal to any aspects of the historical-critical method.¹ Thus it can be said that for at least a century, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, officially subscribed to the historical- grammatical method of Biblical interpretation.

Perhaps the best and most productive way to address the question: "How was it possible for the historical-critical method to be taught at Concordia, St. Louis," is to first examine the Missouri Synod's Weltanschauung. As with Gemütlichkeit and Anfechtung, Weltanschauung does not have an exact English equivalent. Philosophy of life, ideology, or one's world outlook are near equivalents.

If one understands the Missouri Synod's Weltanschauung, or world outlook, one can more easily understand how the historical-critical method entered the seminary training at St. Louis. From almost its founding, there have been individuals in the Missouri Synod who have been concerned with image, with public relations, with proving the Missouri Synod is indeed

scholarly compared with other Lutheran synods and the American church scene in general. Granted, during the infant years of the Missouri Synod, Walther Sihler, Wyneken and many other Missouri Synod leaders had little time to be concerned with putting their best efforts into public relations. Their primary concern was the establishment of a firm confessional Lutheran synod and urgent mission work among the German immigrants who were streaming in groves to the shores of America in search of a better way of life. But as Missouri grew and grew and as the synod became more "established" on the American church scene, there were those in the Missouri Synod who took steps to make their synod look more scholarly, prominent, and impressive to those within Lutheranism and outside of it. A case in point is the granting of honorary doctorate degrees. Dr. C. F. W. Walther, who put an uncompromising stand for strict confessional Lutheranism above anything else, set the stage for this when he accepted an honorary doctor of divinity degree from the Ohio Synod seminary in Columbus, Ohio.² Walther certainly is not to be faulted for this. If any American Lutheran theologian deserved the title doctor, it would be C. F. W. Walther. Professor August Pieper wrote in his "Reminiscences" that Walther told his students that he had accepted the degree because the Ohio Synod at the time showed an interest to amalgamate with the Missouri Synod. Pieper: "Since he did not want to offend them, he decided to accept the title from them. But he warned us not to seek honors such as a title from men. It was common practice among Lutherans in the East to pass out such titles to professors and outstanding preachers to impress other synods and the public in general."³

Unfortunately later generations of Missouri Synod pastors did take Walther's admonition to heart. Concordia, St. Louis itself began granting honorary doctor of divinity (D.D.) degrees in June of 1903.⁴ August Pieper provides an interesting anecdote illustrating how obsessed some Missourians had become about doctor titles and public recognition. This event happened in the mid 1940's: "Not too long ago when I visited a very fine and faithful neighboring pastor of the Missouri Synod, a group of seven or eight young Missouri preachers arrived. The local pastor introduced me as Professor August Pieper of the Wisconsin Synod Seminary at Thiensville. Their answer was: "And we are all docs!"⁵

When Concordia Seminary, St. Louis was founded, first in Perry County, Missouri, in October of 1839, the last thing the Saxon Lutherans had on their mind was advanced degrees for the men teaching at the infant seminary.⁶ Their concern was to put out well trained confessional Lutheran pastors who were to serve and establish congregations among the newly arrived immigrants. The early years of the St. Louis seminary were a time of conservation and confessionalism.⁷ Walther, Brohm, Ottomar Fuerbringer, and many others saw to that. As the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod died out, the new generation of Missouri professors retained their confessional Lutheranism. Carl Meyer writes about the successors of Walther:

Conserving and retaining the teachings of the early leaders of the Synod belonged to the tasks of the new generation ... The conviction that conserving was the immediate task of the teaching force at Concordia Seminary pervaded the thinking of all the instructors, . . . The personal influence of Pieper, Fuerbringer, Stoeckhardt, and Graebner had on the students of Concordia Seminary during the 1890's and the early 1900's was a pervasive one. The history of the Missouri Synod in first half of the 20th century testifies to the thorough indoctrination which the future pastors had received. It

testifies to the confessional loyalty and the desire to conserve the traditions of the first generation of Missouri's theology, the heritage of the 17th century orthodox theologians, and the treasure that had come from Martin Luther as it was understood by them. Academic and scholarly influences however were not great.⁸

The interest of some in the Missouri Synod concerning doctorate degrees soon changed the fact that during time periods "Academic and scholarly influences however were not great."⁹

Beginning in the early 1920's three men, Paul E. Kretzmann, Walter A. Maier, and John T. Mueller earned doctorates at secular universities or non-Lutheran seminaries, while teaching at St. Louis.¹⁰ Walter A. Maier, who was to become one of the most famous Missouri Synod Lutherans who ever lived as the speaker of "The Lutheran Hour," actually began his graduate work in Hebrew and Semitics studies already in the fall of 1916.¹¹ His son, Paul L. Maier, writes in his father's biography:

As graduate fellow, Walter studied at Harvard Divinity School from 1916 to 1918 and at Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences from 1918 to 1920 . . . (he) received his Master of Arts degree in 1920, having completed also most his residence requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy as well as write the first draft of his doctoral dissertation.¹²

The way that Paul L. Maier describes his father's reception at Concordia, St. Louis after earning his Ph.D. in Semitics from Harvard certainly illustrates that the Weltanschauung of the Missouri Synod now had developed quite an appreciation for earned doctorates:

Seminary President Franz Pieper embraced him cordially, as did his successor, Dr. L. Fuerbringer. Neighboring Professor Graebner congratulated him in Latin and Professor Arndt in Greek ... Although final exams were lurking at the end of the week, the faculty and student body scheduled an academic celebration in Professor Maier's honor at the seminary auditorium. It was a jubilant affair, with speeches from the president of the Concordia student association, the faculty, and the city clergy.¹³

About the same time, Paul E. Kretzmann earned a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota and John T. Mueller earned a doctorate from Xenia Theological Seminary, then in St. Louis.¹⁴ Clearly the movement toward earned doctorates for St. Louis professors was beginning to gain momentum. This can be illustrated by the seminary's board of control reason for granting Walter A. Maier a leave of absence to complete his doctorate: "... in the opinion of the Board the professor's studies will redound to the welfare of Concordia, and through the acquisition of the doctorate the cause of our seminary will be promoted in its relationships to circles without our church."¹⁵ Little did the members of the board of control know then that their newly conceived policy concerning graduate work would someday contribute to the near destruction, if not complete destruction of their synod as an orthodox Lutheran church body.

Not everyone in the Missouri Synod applauded the "novel" practice of St. Louis seminary professors attending secular universities to advance their education and scholarship. But those who did soon became the proverbial "voices in the wilderness." One such man was Professor Martin Graebner of Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.¹⁶ Graebner was the younger brother of Theodore Graebner, a professor at St. Louis, and a son of August Graebner, who had been a professor at both the St. Louis seminary and the Wisconsin Synod seminary in Milwaukee. In the opinion of the writer of this monograph, what Martin Graebner wrote concerning the dangers of graduate work at secular universities in 1927 is an incredible example of prophetic vision and insight.

In response to Kretzmann and Mueller earning their doctorates, Martin Graebner wrote his brother Theodore that he had sent:

"... a very strong letter to Pfothenhauer concerning these men (Kretzmann and Mueller) and their ungodly degrees, setting forth why I consider these professors no longer useful to the Church, Both should at once resign or at the very least, return their titles to the heretics who conferred them, and make a public apology. Your faculty need not say another word about the Greuel der falscher Lehre (abomination of false doctrine), as long as you have men in your midst who must go to the heretics and study theology under them . . . Decay has set forth in at the top ... It is the first breach in the great Lutheran bulwark.¹⁷

In an exchange of letters, Theodore Graebner agreed in principle to his brother's vehement warning. Although Theodore Graebner became a liberal during his latter years in life, what he wrote in 1927 is engaging to read in the light of the subsequent history of Concordia, St. Louis.

"... I confessed intense misgivings regarding the entire matter of university degrees or their equivalent. We are not only teachers in Concordia Seminary but are to be examples of efficient and consecrated workers in Christ's vineyard. Let the students once conceive the opinion that the university is the avenue to larger success in the church, and a number of things will follow: 1.) The more ambitious and gifted students will turn to the university. 2.) Of these some will lose their faith, 3.) Some will become warped in their religious views and will find the ministry or professorship in our Synod uncongenial and will drop out of active service, (Five or six cases on record now.) 4.) Some will absorb Modernism and instead of dropping out will remain with us, 5.) Working from within, such unfaithful professors or ministers will first of all destroy the personal standing, if possible, of those who oppose them. They will do this by belittling (sic) their scholarship, taking advantage of their faults, and otherwise ruining their influence, 6.) They will certainly in the end gather disciples about them and thus make Modernism an issue also in the Missouri Synod.¹⁸

Martin Graebner responded to his brother's letter by writing:

I shall also write to Kretzmann. What he says in his defense is also bosh. He quotes Matt. 18, which has no application to a public scandal. It is foolish to say that his teachers are Missourians. The true Missourian will sever

his connection with those who occupy the wrong position. The very fact that he calls these men Missourians shows how far he has already gone. That he wishes to prove to Merger people that 'Missourians are not without brains' is again nonsense. All it proves is, that Kretzmann has brains, and if he took his degree to show them that he has brains I see no reason to doubt his word. No, brother, let us get back to simplicity.¹⁹

Martin Graebner in the same day wrote to Paul E. Kretzmann:

I regard the action of you and Prof. Mueller as the beginning of the end of our orthodoxy. When the future church historian will trace the downfall of Missouri Lutheranism he will point to you two. You are breaking down the dividing line between truth and error. It is not possible for you consistently to tell your students, that all false doctrine is an abomination before the Lord, a thing they should avoid even to the extent of never attending a Sectarian church service. Our young men will get the impression, that the St. Louis Seminary is all right (sic) in its way, but that for real efficiency one must attend other schools of theology. Even now many of our young ministers are gathering much of their sermon material from other sources than our own, and the St. Louis faculty at this time has no more important work than to combat this tendency by precept and example.²⁰

Was Martin Graebner overreacting a bit to Kretzmann's and Mueller's degrees? Perhaps. But it cannot be overlooked that the writer of this research paper is fulfilling what Graebner so impassionedly warned against nearly sixty years ago, that "when the future church historian will trace the downfall of Missouri Lutheranism he will point to you two," or more precisely, to Mueller's and Kretzmann's desire for doctorate degrees, to prove that "Missourians are not without brains."²¹ The prediction: "Our young men will get the impression, that the St, Louis Seminary is all right (sic) in its ways, but that for real efficiency one must attend other schools of theology," was fulfilled to the letter when St. Louis began its drive for accreditation in the 1950's.²² Soon St. Louis was no longer the terminal point for theological training for "serious" scholars.

The terminal point for "real" theological scholarship became Union Theological Seminary, New York, the University of Chicago, and Harvard University, institutions where the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation reigned and reigned alone. What narrow-minded Martin Graebner foretold about his alma mater in his letters of 1927 could not have come more true in his most horrifying nightmares. Fortunately for Martin Graebner, he was dead long before it happened.

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis during the 1920's was a healthy patient with some bad habits for another reason besides its professors attending secular universities. Already during the 1920's, there were Missourians, particularly out in the East and in the English District, who longed for closer ties with Lutheran synods outside of the Synodical Conference. On a synodical level, between 1918-1920 there were six official meetings between representatives of Ohio, Iowa, Buffalo, Wisconsin, and the Missouri Synods.²³ From these meetings the Chicago Theses were drawn up. These theses were "a set of articles on union, covering all the points at issue among those bodies for seventy years."²⁴ These theses were drawn up and adopted by the various representatives in 1925. The Chicago Theses were adopted by the Wisconsin Synod at its convention in 1929, but the Missouri Synod convention in 1929 rejected them. The next year, 1930, the Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio Synods merged to form the old American Lutheran Church.²⁵ For a time the Missourians who favored closer relations with these Lutheran synods had suffered a setback.

Chapter I of "Cancer at Concordia" closes on a high note. In 1932, the Missouri Synod convention adopted the Brief Statement, a short Scriptural statement of the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. Although the Brief

Statement was the work of a committee, it was largely a product of the pen of Dr. Franz Pieper, former president of the Missouri Synod and president of the St. Louis seminary.²⁶ The death of this great Missouri theologian, second only to Walther himself, in June of 1931, and the adoption of the Brief Statement in 1932 can be seen as the high water mark of orthodoxy in the Missouri Synod and at the St. Louis seminary.²⁷ Carl Meyer writes:

The culmination of the period (of conservatism) probably came with the adoption of A Brief Statement in 1932 . . . Largely the product of Pieper's pen, it summed up the conservative confessionalism of the Missouri Synod and the stand of the St. Louis faculty . . . The action of the 1929 convention in rejecting the Chicago Theses, the adoption of A Brief Statement in 1932, the death of Franz Pieper in 1931, and the retirement of the synodical President, F. Pfotenhauer in 1935, marked the end of an era for the Missouri Synod, which may conveniently be dated as coming to a close in 1932.²⁸

There were probably few in the Missouri Synod who ever thought in 1932 that within a generation there would be professors teaching at St. Louis who would eventually deny major tenets of the Christian faith. But the seeds of this apostasy had already been planted.

CHAPTER II

THE PATIENT IS EXPOSED TO CARCINOGENS [^](#)

Chapter I of "Cancer at Concordia" began with the Saxons founding the St. Louis seminary in 1839. Chapter II now begins nearly one hundred years later in a smoke filled office in New York city. The year is 1930. The Missouri Synod is now an "established" church body in the United States, Its founding fathers Walther, Sihler, and Wyneken are now long dead. Two new generations have been born. A movement is now begun to move the Missouri Synod forward, away from "theological stagnation," to a more "progressive" theological position. Professor Kurt Marquart of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana writes in his book Anatomy of an Explosion:

An insight into the origins and motives of this church-political manipulation of the Synod was given by another "insider," a prominent St. Louis seminary scholar (now at "Seminex"), who stated in a graduate class in July 1968

. . . that the "progressive" movement got started in a smoke-filled pastor's office in New York city in 1930, when 3 LCMS pastors . . . decided, after Synod had turned down the Chicago Theses and had authorized the drafting of the Brief Statement, that they would start a movement to 'change Synod.' Their goals were to prepare the LCMS for outreach into America by use of English (vs, German), and by moving Synod toward a more open doctrinal stance. To attain these goals they urged the election of conservative leaders (e.g. Behnken) who would listen to their suggestions of names for seminary presidents professors . . . and other officials. (The professor) said he joined that growing underground movement in 1940.¹

This movement, begun in 1930 or thereabouts, was the beginning of liberalism within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The liberal movement began as Marquart describes it, with "a counter-confessional (ecumenical) attack" on the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod.² In short, this was

a movement within Missouri to unite with non-Synodical Conference Lutherans by quietly moving away from the Synodical Conference position on the doctrine of church fellowship. Later on, the counter-confessional or ecumenical arm of the liberal movement within Missouri created another reticent movement, the counter-Biblical attack, or the stealthy infiltration of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation, first introduced at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.³ This arm of the liberal movement within Missouri, viewed in retrospect, was far more sinister than the ecumenical movement. For the ecumenical movement by the liberals in Missouri was done for the most part in the open, Missourians began to participate in joint prayer and well publicized worship services with other non-Synodical Conference Lutherans. Fellowship talks once again began in 1935 with the old ALC.

The counter-Biblical movement, however, was done at first behind closed doors, in the classrooms at the St. Louis seminary. And what was worse, when the St. Louis faculty began facing charges of having an aberrant method of Biblical interpretation, it continued to insist (with some seemingly convincing evidence and documentation) that nothing at all had changed, particularly the Missouri Synod's doctrinal position.

Chapter II, "The Patient is Exposed to Carcinogens," is so named because during the 1930's the St. Louis seminary began to be increasingly exposed to progressive movements that caused a cancerous growth, theologically, which resulted in the erosion of the orthodox doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod. Like carcinogens, which are substances which produce cancer, the progressive movements within the LCMS caused a cancer to begin

growing at the St. Louis seminary, the historical-critical method.

Much ink has been expended on the counter-confessional movement, unionism, and the resulting break up of the Synodical Conference. This monograph will only focus on how Missouri's ecumenical movement contributed to and fathered the counter-Biblical attack in the LCMS, or more precisely, how the union efforts of the Missouri Synod, beginning in the 1930's contributed to introducing the historical-critical method to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis.

As stated before, the year 1932 found the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States at "high tide" in regard to doctrinal unity and integrity. The year 1932 is the watershed date in the Missouri Synod. After 1932, Missouri's firm doctrinal position began to come apart, A change took place within Missouri concerning the doctrine of fellowship, as the counter-confessional movement, begun in 1930, began to make its presence felt. Professor Edward C. Fredrich of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary writes:

In the brief span of time between the appearance of its Brief Statement and the death of its leader, Franz Pieper, in 1931 and the adoption of its "1938 Resolutions" at the convention of that year, a startling change seems to have taken place in the Missouri Synod. Some aspects of the Missouri transformation during those years are commendable: the vigorous mission outreach into all areas of the United States, completed in the late 1930's when the last state, Arizona, was entered; healthy expansion in overseas mission endeavors; evangelism efforts; radio ministry. The list could be extended much farther.

There was, however, also a disturbing development in the transformation. The series of doctrinal discussions begun in the mid 1930's with representatives of the then newly born American Lutheran Church culminated in 1938 convention action of Missouri that caused Wisconsin to speak out in admonition and protest in 1939. That was the beginning of a continuing

fellowship endeavor on Wisconsin's part to maintain the Synodical Conference on its old foundations, an endeavor that was to last for over two decades until it had to be ended with the break in fellowship with Missouri in 1961 and the withdrawal from the Synodical Conference in 1963.⁴

This new period in Missouri Synod history was manifested in 1935. Carl Meyer writes concerning the events of that year:

The new period in the history of the Missouri Synod was signaled by the election of John W. Behnken as President in 1935. A resolution on 'Relations with the American Lutheran Church and with the United Lutheran Church in America' expressed the willingness of Synod to confer with these bodies 'on problems of Lutheran union with a view toward effecting true unity on the basis of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.' The President was to appoint a committee of five to confer with representatives of these church bodies, William Arndt and Theodore Engelder were members of the Committee on Lutheran Church Union from the St. Louis faculty.⁵

The 1938 convention of the Missouri Synod in St. Louis acted upon the report of the five man committee who had been meeting with representatives from the ALC since 1935.⁶ The St. Louis convention passed the "1938 Resolutions." Of interest to the focus of this monograph is the fact that two members of the St. Louis faculty, Walter A. Maier and Ludwig Fuerbringer, were members of Committee 16 which secured passage of the 1938 Resolutions. Meyer: "The resolution did not establish church fellowship, but pointed toward it."⁷

The participation of some St. Louis faculty members in fellowship talks with the old ALC produced much consternation and dissention, both within the faculty and among some of the ministerium of the Missouri Synod. Already before these fellowship talks began in 1935, there were rumblings of dissention within the St. Louis faculty. Retired Wisconsin Synod pastor Rev. A. T. Kretzmann tells of a story during his seminary years (1929-1931)

at St. Louis when his uncle, Professor Paul E. Kretzmann came home deeply disturbed one evening. When his wife asked what was wrong, Professor Kretzmann told of the events of a faculty meeting held that afternoon. Luring the meeting Seminary president Franz Pieper announced after examining the faculty's printed classnotes that everyone of the professors at St. Louis was in some way deviating from the Word of God, with the exception of himself and Paul Kretzmann. (Theodore Graebner apparently became so angry at these accusations that he stormed out of the room!)⁸ It is interesting to note who were some of the men on the St. Louis faculty at this time: Theodore Graebner, John Fritz, J. T. Mueller, William Arndt, Walter A. Maier, W. Gustav Pollack, Theodore Engelder, and Theodore Laetsch.⁹

A letter dated February 19, 1940, from Paul E. Kretzmann to Rev. Paul Burgdorf is even more revealing. Professor Kretzmann's letter, written in 1940, already indicates a generation before the Seminex walkout, that the St. Louis faculty was no longer a single united theological voice:

It was my intention to write you at length on many points which require earnest discussion, but I can hardly trust myself to set down everything in writing. How would you feel, as an instructor in our CONCORDIA SEMINARY, if you had to be on the defensive on the doctrine of the Antichrist, on the length of a creation day, on evolutionism, on the sanctioning of the modern dance, and other doctrinal and practical questions, when students blandly inform you that other men in the faculty hold more advanced views? I formerly kept a list of the questions on which opinions in our faculty differ widely from the straightforward teaching; of a generation ago, but the subject was too painful. I know that one of the men with whom you are in controversy is committed to compromise, expediency, Melancthonianism, not from opposition to the truth, but simply because he is built that way and has not the ability to distinguish sharply or to insist upon the truth. The other man who you have in mind is brilliant, but very erratic to a very extreme degree, eager for the applause of the multitude, and implacable in his feeling against me for my

share in not having the theses of 1929 accepted, in River Forest. These and other men may not be in the majority in the faculty, but they wield enough influence to swing the majority, as we have seen time and again. You may also have noticed that the president of Synod has not place me on any committee which dealt with questions of doctrine since 1929.

All these experiences have not, as I hope, embittered me. But they have caused me to withdraw from the scene of conflict more and more. Even today I am not sure whether I would have an appreciable number of pastors in Synod on my side if I should step into the open. I might find myself on the outside, looking in, one of these days.²

A month before, the recipient of Dr. Kretzmann's letter, Rev. Paul Burgdorf, published the first edition of the Confessional Lutheran. This church paper was founded by concerned conservative Missourians in response to the acceptance of 1938 Resolutions regarding fellowship with the ALC. Burgdorf and his associates founded the paper "to make a contribution to the cause of Confessional Lutheranism and to Lutheran Confessionalism."¹⁰ "Acceptance of the St. Louis Article of 1938 must be rescinded" was the chief goal of the editors of the Confessional Lutheran.¹¹ Later it will be shown that as the ecumenical movement gained momentum within Missouri, the Confessional Lutheran began attacking members of the St. Louis faculty who participated in it.

One more event occurred in 1940 which is worthy of mention. Rev. Richard Caemmerer joined the faculty in the fall of 1940 to teach homiletics.¹² Known as an outstanding communicator, Caemmerer had been pastor of Mount Olive Lutheran Church in St. Louis before being called to the seminary.¹³ According to one of his students, Rev. Reinhold H. Goetjen of Messiah Lutheran Church in North Hollywood, California, Caemmerer taught his students a strange concept called "love theology," which at the very least was a confusion of law and gospel.¹⁴ Goetjen writes:

When this writer was a student at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., (1939-1943) he received his first indoctrination on this new 'love' theology while studying under Dr. R. R. Caemmerer. This student at that time thought this new 'approach' was wonderful. He had great visions of how the new crop of students with this new 'love' weapon would 'conquer the world.' Dr. R. R. Caemmerer promised (taught) that if we just used enough 'love' we would be able to win anybody. In fact, if we did not win someone, then it would be our fault because we didn't use the right approach, we didn't show enough 'love.' At the time, it never occurred to this writer that Dr. Caemmerer was promising to make us greater missionaries than Christ Himself who by no means won everybody even though He was God and the embodiment of love. 'God is love,' Likewise, it never occurred this writer then that the only way to 'win' a hardened sinner by this method would be to compromise. For if the the hardened sinner resisted the Holy Ghost and refused to repent, he was not won for the Lord even though he may have been added to the church rolls. Is it any wonder that so many of Dr. Caemmerer's 'students ended up as great compromisers with the unconverted sinners in their parishes? Is it any wonder that they were not in favor of disciplining the heretics and errorists?¹⁵

Later Richard Caemmerer was to become one of the signers of the "Statement of the 44" and one of the faculty leaders in the formation of Seminex.

There were five St. Louis faculty members who were signers of the 1945 "Statement of the 44." They were Theodore Graebner, Richard R. Caemmerer, Paul M. Bretscher, W. Gustav Polack, and William Arndt.¹⁶ These five men were the clearest indication yet that the counter-confessional or ecumenical movement had made strong inroads into the St. Louis faculty. Theodore Graebner especially became a leading advocate of the union movement within Missouri, authoring such documents as Historic Lutheran Position in Non-Fundamentals, Prayer Fellowship, and Toward Lutheran Union with Paul Kretzmann.¹⁷ Theodore Graebner and W. G. Polack also advocated the ecumenical movement through their editorials in The Lutheran Witness.¹⁸

The "Statement of the 44" was issued the first week in September of 1945, one month after the dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima, Japan. While the two bombs dropped over Japan helped end World War II,

the Missouri Synod's own "atomic bomb," the "Statement" helped begin one.¹⁹ The "Statement" proved beyond all doubt to everyone in the Synodical Conference, liberal or conservative, that the liberal movement within the Missouri Synod was large and it was growing. The signing of the "Statement of the 44" also proved that at least some members of the St. Louis faculty were now part of that movement. Liberal Missourian Eldon Weisheit writes:

Many welcomed the "Statement" as evidence of a side of Missouri that they said always existed. They quoted Walther and Pieper on their side. Others deplored the "Statement" as a new teaching. They quoted Walther and Pieper on their side. One pastor claimed that each of the 12 theses contained false doctrines. The 44 signers, including five seminary professors, four district presidents, and a retired seminary president, were heroes to some and villains to others. Pastoral conferences and district conventions debated the issues . . . The "Statement of the 44" showed there were two views in the synod.²⁰

At this same time, members of the St. Louis faculty began to participate in ecumenical worship services. The Confessional Lutheran reported in June of 1945 in an article entitled: "We Must Watch Our Seminaries!":

'We must watch our seminaries!' that is timely advice— Among the conditions of membership in the Missouri Synod the following is stipulated by its constitution: 'Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description.' (Article VI.) But consider some of the things that are happening today. 1) The Lutheran Witness of May 22, over a signature of 'G,' has brought a report of a joint meeting of faculties of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, the Theological Seminary of Columbus, Ohio (A. L. C.), and the Wartburg Seminary of Dubuque (A. L. C.), which was opened with a prayer by Dr. L. Sieck. This, despite the fact that the Missouri Synod in 1941 affirmed its position, and as its latest convention, in Saginaw, Michigan, in 1944, reaffirmed its position, stating that 'it be understood that no pulpit, altar, or prayer fellowship has been established between us and the American Lutheran Church; and until such fellowship has been officially declared by the synods concerned, no action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which ignores the fact that we are not yet united.' (Proceedings, Missouri Synod, 1944, P. 251)

2) St. Louis newspapers reported a V-E Day 'Inter-faith Service' in which Prof. Rich. Caemmerer of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, participated together with Catholic prelates, a Jewish rabbi, and pastors of various Reformed sects, one of the participating Catholic prelates opening the service with an invocation, others referred to, including Prof. Caemmerer, following with five- minute addresses, and the latter., substituting for a Missouri Synod pastor who withdrew on instruction by his conference, because of its religious character, closing the service with what was announced to be, and reported as being regarded as, a benediction.'

3) Churchill Tabernacle in Buffalo. New York, 'Buffalo's largest spiritual worship,' publicly announcing its silver jubilee services, held from Palm Sunday to Easter, according to a copy of the announcement before us, announced these services as featuring 'seven great speakers' during the 'seven glorious days' of its celebration ... In the first service, from 12 Noon to 3 P. M., in which Dr. Clinton H. Churchill of the Churchill Tabernacle was announced as 'presiding,' a Presbyterian pastor, a Free Methodist pastor, and Doctor Walter A. Maier of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, were announced as the speakers, the latter being again featured in the evening service, which was broadcast over Station WKBW.²¹

What is even more surprising about the great Walter A. Maier's participation in a blatant unionistic service was his reaction to criticism about it. He appeared to totally ignore it, as if the editors of the Confessional Lutheran were in the wrong and he was in the right. His son Paul L. Maier writes:

The opposition he encountered in his own Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was rare and exceptional, but it smarted, because the criticism came from home. If Maierian theology was 'tradition-Lutheranism expressed in an untraditional manner,' it was only natural that he, as one of his church's leading progressives, should come under attack by the ultra-orthodox. Synod's ultraorthodox were a dwindling splinter group, but a very vocal one. While they approved the Lutheran Hour speaker's battle with Modernism, they also censured him for addressing non-Lutheran groups and praying with them! Interpreting this a 'religious unionism,' their heresy-hunting organ, The Confessional Lutheran, did Walter Maier the honor of attacking him. Naturally he made no reply, for he would not do battle with brethren of constricted mind.²²

Clearly the most famous spokesman of Missouri Synod Lutheranism had also been influenced by the union movement within his synod.

The counter-confessional movement of ecumenicalism was only one of carcinogens the St. Louis faculty exposed itself too. As the union movement gained momentum in the Missouri Synod, more and more St. Louis faculty members began earning doctorates. It has been mentioned previously about Mueller, Maier, and Kretzmann earning their degrees. Carl Meyer writes:

... a segment of the faculty was ready to move toward advanced training and earned degrees. Mueller, Kretzmann, and Maier in the 1920's were the forerunners of the men who earned degrees in the 1940's and later. Before 1941 Schick and Bretscher came to the faculty with doctor's degrees; Arndt and Caemmerer earned their degrees while members of the faculty. In the 20-year span between 1921 and 1941 16 men were called to the staff; only six of these had their degrees when called or earned them in service. Of the next 23 men called to the faculty with the rank of professor (all by the end of 1954), 13 had earned degrees or earned them in service.²³

It is interesting to note that three of the five St. Louis faculty members who signed the "Statement of the 44" had earned doctorates. Caemmerer earned his at Washington University and Bretscher and Arndt earned their Ph.D.'s at the University of Chicago.²⁴ Clearly the secular humanism these men were exposed to in the university classroom was beginning to erode their confessional Lutheran position. Their desire to unite with more "open minded" Lutherans than those of just of the Synodical Conference made them want to be on par with them in terms of scholarship. Hence, many professors at St. Louis began engaging in secular graduate work during the 1940's.

The push for more faculty graduate work at St. Louis, began in the late 1940's, greatly accelerated during Concordia Seminary's accreditation drive in the 1950's. The Book of Reports and Memorials for the Missouri Synod conventions of 1947 and 1950 reveal an ever increasing emphasis on

on graduate work. Consider the reasons given for developing the Graduate School at St. Louis, listed in the Report on Concordia Seminary, St, Louis to the centennial convention of 1947:

We have made steady progress in the development of our Graduate School, Our greatest difficulty is the shortage of manpower in our teaching staff, but only second to this is the lack of adequate classroom facilities, suitable living quarters for graduate students, and a sufficient number of attractive scholarships to make it possible for able and deserving men, either from the ranks of recent graduates or from the ministry and teaching profession, to pursue advanced theological studies. The world has learned to advance the cause of scholarship by providing the means to enable gifted and deserving men to devote their time to scholarly research. We have arrived at a period in our Church when we must learn to do likewise. The time has come when the Church must give more serious thought to the development of this phase of its educational program. We have improved the pretheological training of our clergy, but have done very little toward the development of our theological training beyond the traditional three years. Other Lutheran bodies are beginning to feel the serious need of a strong graduate theological school in America because of the situation of the Church and Lutheran scholarship in Europe, and because even now many Lutheran scholars and theologians are doing their advanced theological work in Reformed or even highly modernistic theological schools. The effect of this on the future of the Church is inevitable. We have made a humble beginning in establishing a Graduate School, but much more must be done before our goal has been reached.²⁵

While it is commendable that the authors of this report raised a red flag for the fact that "many Lutheran scholars and theologians are doing their advanced theological research work in Reformed or even highly modernistic theological schools," their reason for developing the St, Louis graduate program was ominous to say the least.²⁶ "The world has learned to advance the cause of scholarship by providing the means to enable gifted and deserving men to devote their time to scholarly research. We have arrived at a period in our Church when we must learn to do likewise,"²⁷

These two sentences reflect the Missouri Synod's Weltanschauung accurately, an emphasis to advance the cause of scholarship, along side the cause of advancing the Christian gospel.

The 1950 report on Concordia Seminary to the Missouri Synod convention in Milwaukee is even more revealing. The report states in no uncertain terms that one of the goals of the graduate school at St. Louis is "bringing our influence to bear on Lutheran and Protestant theology."²⁸ The report of the graduate school ends with a request for scholarships for promising young men to continue their studies for the doctorate:

Our Seminary ought to aim to exert a greater influence in the theological world today. In God's own providence the disturbed conditions of the world have helped to bring our Synod and Concordia Seminary to the attention of Lutheranism in the world. The Lutheran Hour and other factors have also contributed to make our Seminary known here in America. The time is, therefore, most propitious for us to take the initiative in bringing our influence to bear on Lutheran and Protestant theology. We have already begun to attract pastors and students from other denominations ... Attractive scholarships should be provided to make it possible for our most promising young men to continue their studies for the doctorate.²⁹

Also in 1950, there were two memorials which concerned, graduate work. One called for the founding of an "Institute For Postgraduate Study and Research" and the other called for an increased use of the graduate school at Concordia, St. Louis.³⁰ The latter proposal was offered by the president of the Lutheran Academy for Scholarship, Martin Scharlemann.³¹

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis was a healthy body after 1932, but only for a while. The St. Louis faculty began to expose themselves and their students to the counter-confessional movement within Missouri more and more during the late 1930's and early 1940's. At the same time,

a growing emphasis on scholarship for the sake of scholarship, scholarship as an end in itself, intellectualism if you will, was beginning to develop among many of the professors at St. Louis, as well as many Missourians in general. This scholastic and intellectual emphasis in seminary training caused many Missouri men to enroll in the St. Louis graduate school and in many secular university graduate programs. These events, occurring in the late 1940's and early 1950's set the stage for the infiltration of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation into the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The Weltanschauung of the Missouri Synod would now turn ugly. Cancer was about to strike Concordia.

CHAPTER III

A CANCER IS IMPLANTED IN THE PATIENT: CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS



The first two chapters of this monograph addressed the question concerning how Concordia, St. Louis and its faculty became ripe for the introduction of the historical-critical method. Now Chapter III will directly address the question when did the historical-critical method come to Concordia, St. Louis, and who was responsible for it.

In order to find the answer for the thesis of this research paper, fifteen men were either written to for information or interviewed personally. Five of these men are either seminary presidents or former seminary presidents. All of the men written were in a position to answer partially if not completely the question: "How was the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis?" The vast majority of these men eagerly responded with some very significant insights and information.

As previously mentioned, there is evidence of doctrinal aberrations within the St. Louis faculty at the beginnings of the 1930's. Certainly by the 1940's many pastors in the Missouri Synod began to view some members of the St. Louis faculty with suspicion. In the Reports and Memorials for the 1950 synod convention in Milwaukee, three memorials were presented which called for an investigation of the St. Louis faculty. According to Memorial 634:

WHEREAS, A communication, signed by 127 pastors of our Synod, was in 1946 addressed to the Board of Electors of the St. Louis Seminary, requesting an investigation of five professors of that Seminary;

WHEREAS, The then chairman of the Board of Electors, who was also the chairman of the St. Louis Board of Control at that time in a letter dated May 29, 1946, rejected the request . . . ¹

Memorial 634 went on to state that a special committee of clergy and laymen be appointed to investigate all the facts and then publicly charge them with teaching false doctrine or publicly exonerate them.²

Several other requests were of a similar nature, two specifically mentioning the St. Louis faculty's questionable position on engagement, that it is not tantamount to marriage (May 24, 1949) and. several concerning doctrinal aberrations on church fellowship.³ One other memorial, 636, simply stated:

Charges of a very serious nature (promulgating and adhering to false doctrine) have during the past years been publicly raised against certain members of the St. Louis Faculty by various members of Synod (individuals and conferences) . . . ⁴

While these serious charges are nebulous, events soon happened at Concordia which indicated something far more serious was about to occur. In the fall of the year 1949, Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan was called to teach at St. Louis. Described variously as a "young intellectual" and as a "wunderkind of the Missouri Synod," Pelikan brought to St. Louis his neo-orthodox ideas he learned while earning his doctorate at the University of Chicago.⁵ Now before his twenty-sixth birthday, Pelikan began to teach systematic theology at Concordia. In his book, From Luther to Kierkegaard, published in 1950, Pelikan concluded that today's Lutheranism necessitates a new philosophy. The philosophy or Weltanschauung of Lutheranism during the Age of

Orthodoxy was severely deficient according to Pelikan:

A philosophy for Lutheranism? The question naturally arises: What philosophy? Negatively speaking, it certainly dare not be the philosophy that was current in the Age of Orthodoxy. In spite of the religious and theological value of the doctrinal formulations of the seventeenth century, the philosophical framework of reference which shaped those formulations cannot be critically accepted.⁶

Rather Pelikan challenged Lutheranism to develop a new philosophy in the 20th century, using Soren Kierkegaard's existentialism as a basis: "The work of Kierkegaard is a beginning, but much more remains to be done, especially in the construction of a Lutheran philosophy."⁷ Some of what Pelikan expounds can be viewed in a favorable light, but his emphasis on calling for a modern Lutheran-Christian philosophy for the twentieth century was exactly the catalyze needed to usher in the historical-critical movement at Concordia, St. Louis. After all, what could be more beneficial in developing a modern Lutheran philosophy than a modern method of interpreting the Bible? Kurt Marquart writes:

Among the first public symptoms that the neo-Lutheran historical-critical contagion had reached the Missouri Synod was the publication in 1950, and by the Synod's own Concordia Publishing House, of From Luther to Kierkegaard, written by the young intellectual Jaroslav Pelikan. With supreme confidence in the prevailing winds of doctrine, the book announced that the Lutheran Church had been set on the wrong philosophical track already by Chemnitz and the Formula of Concord, that the German philosopher Immanuel Kant had destroyed the foundations of Lutheran Orthodoxy, and that Lutheranism now needed a new philosophy, namely that of Kierkegaard, to wit: 'Only that is true which is true for me.' Such glib 'trendiness' came now to dominate a new breed of Missouri Synod scholarship which stressed breadth rather than depth. Lutheranism's stately and venerable old doctrinal edifice was no longer seen from within, but only from the perspectives of its avowed enemies. Hence it was no longer understood. External, superficial neglect and dilapidation were mistaken for structural weakness and collapse. And so the rambling old mansion was condemned unsentimentally to be bulldozed in order to make way for some streamlined 'contemporary' abomination, a la Barth, Aulen, or Tillich.⁸

Pelikan did not start teaching at St. Louis until 1949. Nearly all of the evidence points to the fact that throughout the 1940's the historical-grammatical method was accepted and taught at St. Louis. Dr. Walter A. Maier was one of the historical-critical method's harshest critics. Professor John Jeske of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin reported in an interview on March 12, 1986 that during his year of study at St. Louis, from September of 1943 to May of 1944, he was not exposed to or taught any form of the historical-critical method.⁹ Some have maintained that the five St. Louis professors who signed the "Statement of the 44," since they no longer accepted the sedes doctrinae of the doctrine of fellowship by this statement, had to have been expousers of the historical-critical method. Although there may be a grain of truth to this, this view is really the result of a failure to differentiate between the two arms of the liberal movement with Missouri, the counter-confessional movement and the counter-Biblical movement.

Professor Kurt Marquart in Anatomy of an Explosion states flatly that Missouri maintained its orthodox position on Scripture through the 1940's;

The Missouri Synod meanwhile presented its well-known solid front for inspiration-inerrancy throughout the thirties and forties. Even those who favored a softer line on fellowship, and especially towards the ALC, were quite unyielding on the matter of strict biblical authority. The 'Statement' of the 'Forty-Four' insisted in its second thesis on 'the great Lutheran principle of the inerrancy, certainty, and all-sufficiency of Holy Writ.' Dr. William Arndt, St. Louis Seminary Professor, co-translator of Bauer's great New Testament lexicon, and one of the original 'Forty-Four,' continued to write books and articles which not only defended verbal inspiration and inerrancy, but insisted that this matter was crucial to any proper doctrinal agreement among Lutherans.¹⁰

It has already been mentioned that the theologically liberal Jaroslav Pelikan began teaching at St. Louis in 1949. A year earlier, John Tietjen began his seminary training at St. Louis. In a letter dated March 18, 1986 Dr. Tietjen stated in response to the question whether Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were the first ones who brought in professors who taught the historical-critical method:

I shall be brief and direct in response to your letter. No; Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were not the first ones who brought in professors who taught the historical critical method." During my time as a student at Concordia Seminary (1948—1953), I learned the historical critical method in the classrooms of the now sainted William Arndt, Paul Bretscher, Martin Franzmann, and George Schick, That was before Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were in positions of leadership.¹¹

It is unclear from Dr. Tietjen's letter whether he meant that he learned about the historical-critical method from the professors he named or that he was actually taught to use it by these professors. Since Dr. Paul Bretscher later became a full-fledged historical critic later on, John Tietjen could have learned a mild form of it even in the late 1940's. Both Rev. A. T. Kretzmann and his uncle, Dr. Paul E. Kretzmann maintained that William Arndt, although brilliant, often vacillated in the classroom on pertinent doctrinal and exegetical points.¹² Concerning Martin Franzmann and George Schick, no evidence has come to light ever showing them to be historical critics, besides Dr. Tietjen's letter.

Dr. Ewald J. Otto, the chairman of the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis at the time of the formation of Seminex, and an editor of Affirm, was asked via a letter how the historical-critical method came to St. Louis. Dr. Otto responded congenially:

In 1973 I was told that the beginnings of the liberal theology at the Sem went back some 30 years or so. This would take you beyond Dr. Scharlemann and 1952 . . . How far back ahead of 1932 do the h-c beginnings go? Can they be pinned to one person? I doubt it. You have read Exodus from Concordia. Good. Now—if you don't have it—get Prof. Kurt Marquart's 170-page book, Anatomy of an Explosion. It deals with the doctrinal issues and goes back to European roots of liberalism, then to development in the U.S., and finally into the Missouri Synod, . . . That book is a must for you and your church history paper.

One other bit of help: Dr. John Klotz of the Graduate School at our St. Louis Sem. He has an amazing memory and a historical bent of mind. Also, he's close to some of the retired profs who were there at the time of the walk-out. All of which is to say I'm taking the liberty of forwarding your letter to him and also a copy of this letter of mine. I'm sure he'll be of help with your specific question, namely, 'How the historical critical method was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary St. Louis,'

Given my ignorance of the background, I'll still be bold enough to say that I feel that your answer (thus far) as given in the second paragraph of your letter to me is far too simplistic. It was cooking way ahead of Scharlemann.¹³

Dr. John Klotz, director of the Graduate School at St. Louis, acted upon Dr. Otto's request and wrote:

There were concerns expressed over the theology of the faculty at Concordia Seminary beginning in 1945. At the 1930 convention a number of overtures (Memorials) referred to what was being taught at the St. Louis Seminary. In addition there were three specific memorials asking that the doctrinal position of members of the faculty and what was being taught at Concordia Seminary St. Louis be investigated by the Synod. As you know Dr. Scharlemann joined the faculty in September of 1952. It is clear that at least a mild form of historical criticism had begun some years before that time. The concerns did not begin only after he joined the faculty.¹⁴

Although there is nebulous evidence that the historical-critical method had quietly infiltrated the classrooms at Concordia already before 1950, the first solid evidence that there was indeed cancer at Concordia came in the early 1950's. Again Kurt Marquart lists Jaroslav Pelikan as possibly a contributing cause of this:

Pelikan served on the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis from 1949 to 1953. It may or may not be a coincidence that the student unrest over verbal inspiration came to a head in the 1953-54 school year.¹⁵

Herman Otten, editor of the weekly Christian News, began his studies at Concordia, St. Louis in 1952.¹⁶ What he was taught at St. Louis beginning that year created the impetus for the beginning of his newsletter, Lutheran News, later Christian News. Otten describes in no uncertain terms that some St. Louis professors were teaching the historical-critical method;

Christian News had its beginning to a large extent because of what we found while we were studying at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, When we entered the seminary in 1952 we had been led to believe that some professors would try to make us swallow some dead orthodoxy which had no scriptural support. We were determined that we would have to be shown from Holy Scripture that what professors taught was correct. However, we soon discovered that dead orthodoxy was not a problem at Concordia Seminary and that there were students and professors at the seminary who rejected some doctrines clearly taught in the Bible. During the 1953-54 school year a group of students signed a petition requesting the faculty for a clarification of the doctrine of inspiration. Many, though by no means all, could not accept the doctrine of inspiration set forth in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Brief Statement.¹⁷

Otten and other concerned conservative students tried to go through proper channels in trying to answer and put to rest their serious misgivings about the position on Scripture of some of the liberal faculty and students at Concordia. Seminary officials apparently took the position that these conflicts were the results of misunderstandings between the opposing sides. Otten writes in an article "Why Christian News?":

Other concerns about the theological views of various students and faculty members were shared with the administration by a number of conservative students but each time we were told that it was simply a 'semantic' problem, a case of talking past one another,' We complained about various articles which appeared in the Seminarian, a student publication, but nothing was done.¹⁸

Otten even went so far as to appeal to a former LCMS vice-president, and to LCMS president John W. Behnken, about what was going on in the classrooms at St. Louis, all with little or no result.¹⁹ Herman Otten and his fellow conservatives also learned that not only was the historical-critical method being taught in the classrooms, liberal professors and students also had control over the seminary press and bookstore:

During the years we were at Concordia Seminary we also discovered how the liberals manage to control the press and to a large extent the books featured in the seminary book store. The seminary's theological publication was in the hands of liberals ever since the days when Dr. Martin Marty was a student there. Liberal professors such as Dr. Richard Caemmerer were the mentors behind the liberal editors and writers. These liberals often met with Dr. Caemmerer in his 'upper room.' We were unsuccessful in getting an invitation to join this select group.²⁰

Just who were the professors Otten and his conservative cohorts believed taught false doctrine? The editor of Christian News was asked this through correspondence. His reply was a listing of references to various publications he produced or helped produce, among them Handbook of Vital Christian Issues and Christian News Encyclopedia.²¹ Apparently for once Herman Otten had very little to say about historical-criticism at St. Louis.

But others had much to say about the "pioneers" of teaching the historical-critical method at St. Louis. While it has been established that several professors (Arndt, Bretscher, perhaps Franzmann and Schick) possibly taught a mild form of historical-criticism already in the late 1940's, two events happened in 1952 which were highly significant in the implantation of the cancer of historical-criticism at St. Louis. In 1952, Dr. Martin Scharlemann was called to St. Louis to teach in the field of New Testament exegetical

theology. That same year, Dr. Arthur Repp became academic dean at St. Louis.²² These two men played key roles in introducing on a large scale the historical-critical method to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis.

Martin Scharlemann had graduated from the St. Louis in 1934 earned a doctorate in classics from Washington University in 1938. He served in the parish ministry and as a chaplain in the United States Army Air Force for several years.²³ In the summer of 1949 Martin Scharlemann attended the Princeton Theological Institute in Princeton, New Jersey.²⁴ Here he was to begin to learn some methods of Biblical interpretation which in later years he would deeply regret. Dr. Frederick Danker in his book No Room in the Brotherhood writes: "Dr. Scharlemann, who had been working with Professors Kristen Stendahl of Harvard and Otto Pieper of Princeton on a project in modes of Biblical interpretation thought it was high time for the Synod to come abreast of the contemporary scene in biblical studies."²⁵

After he was called to St. Louis, Scharlemann began working on a project which eventually would become a twenty-six page single spaced paper entitled: "The Bible as Record, Witness and Medium." According to Scharlemann's own note, it was a product of "more than six years of investigation and reflection."²⁶ Scharlemann's reading of this paper to the Northern Illinois District Pastoral Conference created a tremendous controversy, due to its content, which showed a clear espousal to some aspects of the historical-critical method. In the words of Dr. Danker: "In the early months of 1959, Dr. Martin Scharlemann put the finishing touches on a bomb that was to shatter forever the fragile peace of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod."²⁷

The question then is this: How soon did Martin Scharlemann begin teaching the historical-critical method after his arrival at Concordia? The evidence points to very soon. In stating the reasons for beginning Christian News, Herman Otten does not mention any professors by name which he accused of teaching false doctrine. But John Klotz, in a letter previously quoted, states:

I don't recall when I first became acquainted with Dr. Scharlemann, I suspect it was very shortly after he began teaching at Concordia Seminary. At the time I was a member of the faculty of Concordia College River Forest. He was chairman of the Committee on Scholarly Research which sponsored the production of my book, "Genes, Genesis, and Evolution." Subsequently I became a member of that committee, and I got to know Dr. Scharlemann quite well. I believe it is fair to say that he became enamored of historical criticism, and there is little doubt that he referred to its techniques and procedures in his teaching, I shared some of the concerns that the sainted Dr. Becker had regarding some of the materials he wrote (I assume you had the privilege of knowing Dr. Becker) Dr. Scharlemann and I still remained good friends. My theological position was that of Dr. Becker, not that of Dr. Scharlemann.²⁸

According to Dr. Edgar Krentz of Christ Seminary-Seminex, about three years after he came to St. Louis, Dr. Scharlemann presented to the faculty a discussion paper on using the historical-critical method.²⁹ It was prepared by Scharlemann himself and Horace Hummel who was a graduate assistant at the time.³⁰ The content of this paper can only be briefly summarized. In his "Notes" Scharlemann' tries very hard to be a conservative Lutheran while at the same time he accepts many of the historical-critical method's presuppositions. Beginning with his definition of the method, it is evident Scharlemann was quite comfortable in using it: "The historical-critical method is in essence the application to Scripture of the principles of historical research and of literary criticism."³¹

Martin Scharlemann's paper consists of twenty points or theses on how a confessional Lutheran could validly use the historical-critical method. Consider three of them:

9.) In matters of ideational as well as grammatical translation, 'equally consecrated Lutheran theologians may differ without on that account being in doctrinal disagreement.' Differences of opinion as to the form of the Scriptural document or the writer's intent do not imply any doubt of the truth whatever is expressed, or any desire to exercise autonomy over the Scriptural revelation. This moves us out of the area of doctrinal disagreement into the sphere of 'permissible exegetical difference' (in accordance with and subject to the analogia fidei and specifically the Lutheran Confessions, of course") The 'conservative' will surely be reluctant to abandon older viewpoints with cogent evidence (where opinions will differ), he will insist on caution and sobriety, etc., but he will also refrain from labeling something as 'rationalistic,' etc., which need not necessarily be so.³²

11.) Let us consider first the problem of ancient historiography , Obviously, there are no 'histories' in the Bible precisely like our histories, although they vary widely among themselves in similarity to our forms (cf, the 'Court History of David' with the Chronicler, the synoptists with John etc.). It is really regrettable that the Hebrew designation of 'former prophets' for many O.T. books was replaced by the Greek (LXX) title, 'historical books,' That is, the Biblical 'histories' are Written almost exclusively to illustrate and demonstrate a theological thesis (i.e., the prophetic doctrine of history); they are concerned more with Geschichte than with Historie. The fact that the Biblical records have been revealed in history should also mean that, as with other historical peoples, Israel's memories and traditions of its early existence have been refracted through the prisms of later experiences, determining the selection and accentuation of materials (cf, the Gospels).³³

16.) Among the ancient forms of Scripture, which it is a constant struggle for us to understand and evaluate properly, must probably (and at least may, it would seem, in the light of comparative materials) be included the use of saga, legend, myth, pseudepigraphy, vaticinium ex eventu, etc., -- all of which appear to us to be 'false', but hardly so by the standards of antiquity and presumably then not of Scripture either—seen as historical revelation. This may be compared somewhat to the use throughout Scripture of various kinds of parabolic material—

and even of fables (cf. Judges 9 and. II Kings 11;). We feel that that hermeneutical rule which insists that these Gattungen must always be labelled as such is an extra-Scriptural one which at least may not be insisted upon as an article of faith (hence possible applications to Jonah, Daniel, the Samson and Elisha pericopes, the angel vs. Sennacherib, the visit of the Magi, etc.). That is, there is again here an area of permissible, exegetical disparity without any necessary doubt or denial of Scripture's truth (as measured by the original intent). (Cf. also the traditional Lutheran hermeneutics of the apocalyptic literature.)³⁴

A complete reading of "Notes on the Valid Use of the Historico-Critical Method" clearly shows that Scharlemann and Hummel in the year 1955 appeared to accept nearly all of the tenets of the historical-critical method. While Scharlemann and Hummel do reject the extreme elements of it, such as "many" of Rudolf Bultmann's demythologizing applications, they stress in no uncertain terms what a valuable tool the historical-critical method is.³⁵ This can be seen from their concluding paragraph:

20.) Thus, the historico-critical method teaches us again what it means 'to live by faith alone' (i.e., not sight or rational proof), at the same time that it gives us an invaluable key to the original intent and thus also to the contemporary interpretation and application of Scripture. It enhances our appreciation of the magnitude of God's condescension, climaxing in the incarnation of His Son. And it enables the Church today better to interpret contemporary events as part of the same historical process recorded in Scripture leading up to the great eschatological denouement.³⁶

From a careful study of this exploratory paper, one could easily conclude that Martin Scharlemann was a full fledged historical-critic in 1955. The evidence certainly points to it. But there is one dissenting voice about this conclusion that needs to be reckoned with and heard. This is the voice of Dr. Robert Preus, president of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Dr. Preus is recognized as the

leading American authority on the theology and writings of the seventeenth century orthodox Lutheran theologians. In both liberal and conservative Lutheran circles, Robert Preus is considered to be one of the most brilliant systematic theologians in Lutheranism today. Dr. Preus taught systematic theology at Concordia Seminary from 1957 "to 1974."³⁷ In a letter to the author of this monograph, dated April 2, 1986, Dr. Preus gives a first hand eyewitness account of Martin Scharlemann's involvement in espousing the historical-critical method at St. Louis during the late 1950's.

The first meeting I ever attended among the faculty was the fall retreat in 1957. It was at that meeting that Martin Scharlemann stood up before the entire faculty and declared that the Bible, which is true, 'contains errors,' The reaction from men like Franzmann, Roehrs, Spitz, J.T. Miller, (sic) Merkens, and many, many others was almost violent. He was rejected out-of-hand and the younger liberal men who were already there, like Krentz, sat sedately quiet during the discussion. But Scharlemann was undaunted and went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques, but never actually endorsing the method or even talking much about it. It was his colleagues at the time, Krentz, Fred Danker, and then later Klein and Smith and Casey Jones, and many others in the exegetical and other, departments, including Sauer and Wegner (Wisconsin men) who endorsed the method and brought it into full use at the seminary. Scharlemann saw what was happening, drew back, and even repudiated his colleagues in a most forthright way, totally typical of his approach to all issues. The method being totally endorsed and put in action by the exegetical department was then defended by the faculty as such, except for four or five of us including Scharlemann and four men in the Systematics department (Bohlmann was not around much in those days).³⁸

The key sentence in Dr. Preus' eyewitness account is: "Scharlemann was undaunted and went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques, but never actually endorsing the method or even talking much about."³⁹ In view of the contents of Scharlemann's 1955 paper, "Valid Uses of the Historico-Critical Method," it appears that

Dr. Preus does not have all his facts, or that he does not have them straight, or at the very least, he is presenting Scharlemann's views in the most favorable light possible, almost at the expense of history. But the writer of these lines has heard Robert Preus speak a number of times as a guest lecturer at Concordia, College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, The lectures were on such topics as the inspiration of Scripture, baptism, and repentance and absolution. It has been his experience that when Robert Preus speaks on a theological topic, he knows what he is talking about. From his numerous books and journal articles, Robert Preus has proven that when he writes on doctrinal subjects, he especially knows what he is talking about. The writer of this research paper will now attempt to synthesize what Scharlemann himself wrote about his views on the historical critical method in 1955 and what Dr. Preus experienced concerning Martin Scharlemann's views of the historical-critical method in 1957. Hopefully, the truth will be preserved and justice will be done to both of these accounts.

Based on Scharlemann's own writings, his own actions, and the accounts of others, it cannot be denied that Martin Scharlemann did accept some presuppositions and some of the methodology of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation. The evidence is simply too overwhelming to conclude otherwise. Preus is right when he comments: "Scharlemann . . . went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques ..." ⁴⁰ John Klotz: "I believe it is fair to say that he became enamored of historical criticism, and there is little doubt that he referred to its techniques and procedures in his teaching." ⁴¹ Then why did Dr.

Preus write: "Scharlemann was undaunted and went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques, but never actually endorsing the method or talking much about it?"⁴² What the author of this monograph interprets Dr. Preus to be saying is this: Scharlemann did not ever fully endorse the use of all the historical- critical method, just certain aspects of it. Scharlemann in effect "got the ball rolling" down the path to historical-critical methodology, but there were many others who later contributed significantly to introducing this method of Biblical exegesis on a very large and broad scale at St. Louis, Robert Preus writes: "It was his (Scharlemann's) colleagues at the time, Krentz, Fred Danker, and then later Klein and Ehlen and Smith and Casey Jones and many others in the exegetical and other-- departments, including Sauer and Wegner (Wisconsin men) who endorsed the method and brought it into full use at the seminary."⁴³

After Martin Scharlemann perceived where the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was leading his seminary and his synod, to a total apostasy of every article of the Christian faith, he had a change of heart. This is well documented by the testimony of his colleagues and former students. In a letter dated February 15, 1986, Dr. J. A. O. Preus, former president of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod writes:

Scharlemann delivered several papers in Synod supporting the HCM, but was compelled to apologize for disturbing the church over this at our 1962 Cleveland convention. I was there (and) heard the whole thing. I do not know if S. (Scharlemann) ever changed his mind, but he was a changed man after that time (and) began actively opposing his old colleagues and the theology they espoused. So S. (Scharlemann) played a role in introducing the HCM but he was not solely responsible for it. At the time of the walk-out all of the exegetes to my knowledge held the view (and) the rest of the faculty either held it or permitted it.⁴⁴

A former student of Dr. Scharlemann, Professor Daniel Moriarity of Concordia College, Ann Arbor, Michigan writes of his experiences with Dr. Scharlemann in a letter written to the author of this research dissertation, dated January 28, 1986:

Anyway, getting back to your question whether Dr. Scharlemann remained a 'closet historical critic' the rest of his life. My impression is no he didn't. Let me share some facts I know: After John Tietjen was elected president of the seminary, Dr. Scharlemann was the professor who wrote to President Jacob Preus, calling for an investigation of the seminary and its theological stance. He underwent extreme enmity from the faculty because of this request: he was officially censured by the faculty in 1970. It was at this time that the synod first knew that there was a faculty 'majority' and a faculty 'minority.' If he was a 'closet historical critic' during those very painful years (to the point of eventually having a nervous breakdown in 1974 when he was acting president of the seminary and was receiving crank calls at all hours of the night), it would seem so highly ridiculous to go through all that turmoil and tribulation.

As far as my personally hearing such teaching from him, I only had one course with him on the Parables. It was excellent. When some students talked about the differences between the gospels' accounts of the same parables, instead of giving the usual liberal answer that there were mere inventions of the early church, rather, he argued that Jesus had to have told these parables frequently, in more than one setting, and it was left to the evangelist (guided by the Holy Spirit) which version of the parable he would use in his gospel. This seemed to me to be a fair answer, and certainly not the typical answer of a higher critic. I really have to say that I never experienced any aberrations of doctrine in his teaching in the classroom, or in private conversations. I also knew him as my division chairman when I taught Greek and Hebrew at the seminary in 1974-1975. I cannot remember any support given for the historical-critical method. In fact, he often (sic) used to counter that Lutherans use the historical-grammatical method. I have a strong hunch that he coined the term or at least used it rather frequently.⁴⁵

Moreover, Dr. E. J. Otto, one of the editors of Affirm, writes in a letter previously quoted:

. . . I'll say what you probably know, namely that Dr. Scharlemann (Martin, that is. There's a liberal Robert) came—thank God—to a full turn and was a leader among the faithful five who took the Sem and its problems to the then new synodical president, Dr. J. A. O. Preus. Scharlemann's days as acting president, following the suspension of Tietjen, were crucial to the successful return of the school to the old paths.⁴⁶

Scharlemann's colleague on the St. Louis faculty for seventeen years, Dr. Robert Preus, in the same letter previously quoted,, testifies that Prof. Scharlemann later refuted the historical-critical method, the very method of Biblical interpretation he was instrumental in introducing at his alma mater: "Scharlemann saw what was happening, drew back, and even repudiated his colleagues in a most forthright way ..."⁴⁷

Dr. Preus of the Fort Wayne seminary was kind enough to send to the author a series of essays on the historical-critical method, published by Affirm, entitled; Occasional Papers. One of the essays written by Martin Scharlemann, entitled "Some Sobering Reflections on the Use of the Historical-Critical Method," reveals significantly that Scharlemann's perception and appraisal of the historical-critical method had indeed changed;

Because the Scriptures are the Word of God, written for us men by the chosen and inspired prophets and apostles of God, the Historical-Critical Method is as inadequate (to put it mildly) for the interpretation of the Scriptures as a two-dimensional map is inadequate for the geographer's interpretation of the earth. When they are consistent, these historical critics of the Bible do in reality and in practice deny that the meaning of the text which the Christian teaching exhibited in the Lutheran Confessions (Book of Concord) is authoritative and binding for the doctrine and life of all Christians. . .

What has been said so far is not intended to suggest that theological students ought not be taught about the Method. No responsible curriculum could leave out such a study. But the teaching of the material needs to be done in much the same

way as time is given, let us say, to a study and analysis of the allegorical method as it was used in the medieval church. The Method needs to be explained in such a way as to enable students and pastors to read with understanding the literature which uses the Method, but with the constant caveats of its pitfalls and fallacies.⁴⁸

Dr. Martin Scharlemann probably would have been more than happy to clarify his role in introducing the historical-critical method to St. Louis and his role in trying to suppress its use after his change of heart. Unfortunately, Professor Scharlemann died in August of 1982.⁴⁹ For better or for worse, his writings and the testimony of those who knew and worked with him must now defend his name.

While Dr. Martin Scharlemann continued with his exploratory papers on the historical-critical method, two younger men on the St. Louis faculty, Frederick Danker and Edgar Krentz, began quietly introducing their students to the modernistic method of Biblical interpretation they had learn and been exposed to in their graduate work, Danker at the University of Chicago, and Krentz at the Washington University.⁵⁰

Frederick Danker graduated from St. Louis in 1945, After less than ten years in the parish, he became a professor of exegetical theology (New Testament) at St. Louis in 1954. He earned a doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1963.⁵¹

Edgar Krentz never served in any Missouri Synod parish as a pastor. He graduated from Concordia, St. Louis in 1952. After earning an M.A. from Washington University, Krentz joined the St. Louis faculty in the fall of 1953.⁵² Danker and Krentz both played key roles in popularizing the historical-critical method at Concordia, St. Louis. A reading of

even one chapter of Danker's book, No Room in the Brotherhood, subtitled, "The Preus-Otten Purge of Missouri," reveals Danker's colors as a thorough going theological liberal.⁵³ Professor Edward Fredrich of the Wisconsin Synod aptly sums up the quality and content of Danker's monograph:

The one good reason for reading the book is to find out just what 'moderates' were thinking, as the Missouri conflicts went on. That the books tells us. It demonstrates, not the way things were, but the way one side thought they were.⁵⁴

Dr. Krentz was allowed to diffuse his liberal theological views significantly by being appointed librarian at Concordia, St. Louis in 1955.⁵⁵ Carl Meyer credits Krentz among others for the St. Louis library's acquisition of "current theological works."⁵⁶ Dr. Krentz was asked through correspondence to clarify and delineate his role in promulgating historical criticism at St. Louis. Now a professor at Christ Seminary-Seminex, Dr. Krentz responded:

I received your letter asking for information about the introduction of the historical critical method into the classrooms of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

I have now been removed from the unfortunate controversy in the LCMS for a decade, and from the early years of teaching at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) by over thirty years. At this time both my interests and time are devoted to other topics in biblical studies. For that reason I will not use the opportunity to respond to your questions about Missouri Synod history.⁵⁷

The St. Louis exegetical department during the 1950's deserves only some of the infamy for introducing the historical-critical method to Concordia Seminary's classrooms. There is substantial documented evidence that a very real impetus for introducing "modern scholarly conclusions" concerning Biblical hermeneutics came from the offices of the seminary administration, particularly the offices of the president and the academic

dean.

The calling of Martin Scharlemann to the exegetical department in 1952 was not the only significant event that happened at Concordia that year. That same year, Dr. Arthur Repp was appointed academic dean. Dr. Repp was a 1929 graduate of the St. Louis seminary. He joined the faculty of his alma mater in 1945, teaching in the field of Christian education. Repp earned a Ph.D. from Washington University in 1951.⁵⁸ Repp put his interest in Christian education into action in two ways. Under his leadership, the drive to have Concordia Seminary accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools (AATS) gained momentum. The seminary became an associate member in 1956.⁵⁹ Repp also dedicated himself to recruiting professors for St. Louis who were "progressive" in their theological perspectives.

A year later in 1953, Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer, grandson of one of the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod, was called to succeed Louis J. Sieck as president of the St. Louis seminary.⁶⁰ Fuerbringer was a 1925 graduate of St. Louis and was president of Concordia Teacher's College, Seward, Nebraska, before being called to St. Louis.⁶¹ Dr. Fuerbringer, like his academic dean Dr. Repp, immediately began a movement at the seminary to "modernize" the faculty. Three years after Fuerbringer arrived, the first sabbatical leaves were granted to St. Louis professors to do advanced graduate and research work.⁶² Concordia's accreditation movement under Fuerbringer's administration resulted in the AATS accepting Concordia as a member in 1964.⁶³

However, the most significant and ominous venture Fuerbringer and Repp devised to modernize the faculty was their efforts to attract professors who

subscribed to modern and scholarly methods of Biblical interpretation. Were Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp largely responsible for bringing professors to Concordia who were historical critics? There is substantial evidence which indicates this is exactly what happened. Professor Daniel Moriarity in a letter previously quoted, writes:

I really can't say whether Dr. Scharlemann was the person who introduced the historical-critical method to Concordia Seminary or not. However, I do remember hearing Dr. Lewis Spitz, (the elder) mention during the 'hub-bub' of the 'war years' in St. Louis (1974-75), when so many on the (then) faculty majority were pointing the finger at Dr. Scharlemann, that it was really Drs. Arthur Repp and A. O. Fuerbringer (former president of Concordia Seminary) who instigated the movement to 'open up' the faculty to more 'scholarly conclusions, Dr. Spitz reported to a small group of us once that he overheard Drs. Repp and Fuerbringer talking as they were walking home behind him one evening after classes. Dr. Repp mentioned that something was going to have to be done to 'modernize' the faculty. The conclusion was reached that if the faculty was going to prepare pastors for a modern ministry, they were going to have to go to accredited universities for their advanced degrees. It also seems to me that he said that in that same discussion there was concern expressed about the academic credentials of the faculty and how this affected the educational standing of the seminary (accreditation was part of this discussion).⁶⁴

Is this story the proverbial "smoking gun" which solves the "mystery," of how the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis? While the mentioned sources are reliable, it would certainly be a mistake to conclude on the basis of this account, told third hand, of an overheard conversation transpiring over thirty years ago, that Repp and Fuerbringer were the real instigators in bringing historical criticism to St. Louis,

The basic assumption, however, although originating from less than authoritative and irrefutable sources, does have further substantiation,

some of it very conclusive.

Consider the testimony of the two Preus brothers, Jack and Robert, both intimately connected to the turmoil at the St. Louis seminary in the days preceding the formation of Seminex. Both were asked through correspondence if Alfred Fuerbringer and Arthur Repp were the instigators in bringing the historical-critical method to Concordia, St. Louis. Jack Preus responded by stating:

Fuerb. (and) Repp as pres. (and) dean of the sem hired many profs who either favored or permitted the H. C. method. I am sure they personally accepted it. They were probably encouraged to do so by Scharlemann (and) others.⁶⁵

Robert Preus supplements his brother's insights by writing:

First of all, both Fuerbringer and Repp had nothing to do with actually promoting the historical critical method. Neither was an exegete and neither read enough in that area to know even what the historical critical method was. But Fuerbringer, in order to build up the school, as he thought, and Repp because he was a bit liberal in his openness to all kinds of new exegetical 'insights,' did promote professors who did teach the method.⁶⁶

The testimony of the Preus brothers is significant considering these two did more to try to restore confessional Lutheranism at Concordia, St. Louis after the walkout than anyone else. But the argument for Fuerbringer and Repp being the instigators of bringing historical criticism to St. Louis could not be complete unless the two men themselves were allowed to defend themselves and give their version of their roles as president and academic dean during their years of service at St. Louis. Both men were written on March 19, 1986 and were asked forthrightly if they were the ones primarily responsible for bringing professors

to St. Louis who subscribed to the historical-critical method.

Drs. Repp and Fuerbringer are now living in retirement. Both are well into their eighties, yet each was kind enough to respond to a rather uncomplimentary accusation. Dr. Arthur Repp, in a letter dated March 22, 1986, stated his role as academic dean at Concordia, St. Louis:

Thank you for your letter of March 19 and your concern for God's will in accord with the 8th Commandment, a sometimes rare concern in church controversies,

I was academic dean at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1952 to 1972 and as such had the responsibility of recommending new faculty members to the president and from there to an electoral board who made the final choice.

Since the 'historical-critical method' is defined in a variety of ways, I must assume that you define it in a manner contrary to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

One of the criteria for recommending a candidate to the faculty was his loyalty to the Confessions, I must say emphatically that no one I suggested was guilty of denying basic tenets of the Holy Scriptures and at no time, to my knowledge, taught the historical critical method in a manner contrary to the Confessions.

Unfortunately some of the 'conservative* Lutherans teach the Bible without realizing that God was often speaking to people in terms they could understand, e.g. the universe. If he had spoken of the universe in accord with today's concept they would not have understood what he was saying. Literalism often destroys the message and that is not orthodoxy.⁶⁷

Obviously, the author of this dissertation and Dr. Repp have two different definitions of the historical-critical method. This accounts for the difference why the writer of these lines names Dr. Repp as one of the men most responsible for bringing the historical-critical method to St. Louis, while Dr. Repp maintains his innocence on the basis of his definition of the historical-critical method.

Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer, now living in retirement in Norman, Oklahoma, proved from his responding letter that he is quite a scholar even in his retirement years. He responded to an inquiry about his role in bringing professors to St. Louis who subscribed to the historical-critical method with a detailed and well thought-out three page letter. Dr. Fuerbringer began on a very helpful note by giving his definition of the historical- critical method, using the words of Robert Smith, a former Seminex professor:

. . . historical-critical methodology is a tool for Biblical interpretation and can be used both negatively and positively, (he) compared it to a hammer than can be utilized for beneficial purposes like building a house but can also be used destructively, e.g., to kill a person by hitting him over the head. One doesn't condemn the tool for what the user does with it.⁶⁸

On the basis of this rather open-ended definition, Fuerbringer then traces the use of "historical critical judgments conservatively used," by such men as his father, Ludwig Fuerbringer and the Wisconsin Synod's August Pieper.⁶⁹

The real gist of Fuerbringer's letter comes when he asks the question "So what has all this to do with the time of my presidency of Concordia Seminary (1953-1969)?" Fuerbringer continues by writing:

My father and his contemporaries attended no universities or divinity schools, basing their teaching on reading and independent study. But their younger colleagues began to study elsewhere (Walter A. Maier at Harvard; Wm. Arndt at Washington/St. Louis; etc.) The latter were also quite conservative but did expand somewhat on the historical critical judgments of their seniors (e.g., Arndt with regard to Ephesians). When some of the next generation of students studied, in greater numbers and at more universities including some in Europe, they discovered that among the exponents of historical criticism there were a goodly number of sincere Bible-believing Christians much of whose methodology could be adopted. Those in this group of Concordia

graduates, plus a few Wisconsin Synod men, who were called to the seminary during my administration were all examined by a committee consisting of the president of the synod, the president of the district, a member of the synod's board for higher education and members of the seminary board. All were found to be in agreement with the doctrinal paragraph of the synod's constitution. Where they differed in matters of interpretation from the more traditional viewpoints they were asked to consult with their older colleagues. I regret that later some of them went off the deep end, as it were, and failed to use the proper amount of moderation, patience and sound pedagogical judgment in dealing with others, especially some very conservative students, clergy and laity. Some of the latter began to use unbrotherly tactics over against some of the professors and so a controversy began and became quite heated. I don't claim to be without fault in all of this, but I maintained then and have 'since, that during my presidency as far as I could find out none of the faculty members denied the truth and reliability of any part of the Holy Scriptures/or taught contrary to the Lutheran confessions. Of course, I did not agree with all of the conclusions reached in matters of interpretation or historical criticism.⁷⁰

Dr. Fuerbringer traces how many St. Louis professors began more and more to do advanced studies overseas in Europe and at secular universities in this country. Fuerbringer freely admits that these men learned the methodology of historical criticism and adopted it from exponents of it at these institutions.

Fuerbringer, like Repp, insists that these men's theological positions were sound: "All were found in full agreement with the doctrinal paragraph of the synod's constitution."⁷¹ He shows little remorse for the false doctrines the historical criticism began producing. According to Dr. Fuerbringer, the most colossal mistake these men made was they "failed to use the proper amount of moderation, patience, and sound pedagogical judgment in dealing with others, especially some very conservative students, clergy, and laity."⁷²

As one reads Dr. Fuerbringer's comments, one is continually forced to ponder if the president of the St. Louis seminary really knew what was being taught in the exegetical classes at the seminary during his administration. Dr. Fuerbringer states: "... during my presidency as far as I could find out none of the faculty members denied the truth and reliability of any part of the Holy Scriptures or taught contrary to the Lutheran confessions."⁷³

From this last quotation from Dr. Fuerbringer, it is evident that both the seminary president and the academic dean saw nothing wrong in the transition Concordia Seminary underwent from the historical- grammatical method to the historical-critical method during the 1950's and the early 1960's. They were not alarmed at the cancer they helped introduce at their institution, even though Fuerbringer acquiescently states: "Of course, I did not agree with all of the conclusions reached in matters of interpretation or historical criticism."⁷⁴ Fuerbringer and Repp did not realize that the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was malignant because this modern method of hermeneutics did not militate against their hermeneutical presuppositions or their concept of confessional subscription.

A careful reading of two letters written by Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer in 1966 in response to an inquiry by then LCMS president, Dr. Oliver R. Harms, about the doctrinal position of the St. Louis faculty reveals that Fuerbringer during his years as Concordia Seminary president had become quite an articulate and formidable exponent of the historical-critical method practiced by the St. Louis faculty.⁷⁵

This dissertation is above personally attacking either Dr. Repp or Dr. Fuerbringer, These two retired seminary professors proved themselves to be Christian gentlemen by their correspondence. But the writer of these lines considers these two men to be major characters in a high tragedy, a tragedy played against the backdrop of the Concordia Seminary campus. For what could be more tragic than this scenario: Two men, who were given roles of very important responsibility by their church body, as seminary president and academic dean, set out in the name of scholarship to train young men for a "more excellent ministry" by instigating a modern method of Biblical interpretation. What was the result? The cancer of historical-criticism infiltrated an entire seminary and nearly destroyed the confessional position of an entire synod. Although Fuerbringer and Repp embarked upon a venture to educate men for a modern Christian ministry, what they ultimately helped accomplish was that through St. Louis educated pastors, tens of thousands of Missouri Synod Lutherans were led astray from their confessional Lutheran position, a position the Missouri Synod had championed for over a century. Yet, it was all done, in the name of modern scholarship.

Chapter III of "Cancer at Concordia" closes with the patient, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis infected with the cancer of the historical- critical method. It is now the mid 1950's. Martin Scharlemann and Horace Hummel have delivered their paper supporting the historical- critical method. The fateful series of events which lead to the Seminex walkout in February of 1974 have now commenced.

Chapter III closes by once again asking the thesis sentence of this monograph; "How did the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation come to be introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis?" Can it be traced to one person on a specific date and year? Dr. E. J. Otto says no. Few would argue that the former chairman of the St. Louis board of control is wrong. The historical-critical method was introduced to Concordia, St. Louis as a result of the two arms of the liberal movement which quietly infiltrated the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the counter-confessional movement and the counter-Biblical movement. It came to the St. Louis seminary under the name of modern Biblical scholarship. It came by such exegetical "pioneers" as Martin Scharlemann, Edgar Krentz, and Frederick Danker in the field of New Testament theology, and Carl Graesser, Norman Habel, and Alfred von Rohr Sauer in Old Testament exegesis.^{76, 77} It came under the auspices of the St. Louis seminary president, Alfred O. Fuerbringer and academic dean Arthur Repp.

Who deserves the blame and denunciation for introducing the historical- critical method at St. Louis? The blame is to be shared by many, several St. Louis faculty members can be specifically mentioned. But what really caused historical criticism to come to Concordia was the Missouri Synod's Weltanschauung, its mindset inclined to appear scholarly and prominent in the public eye. When this point is considered, hundreds if not thousands in Missouri must share the blame for events transpiring up to February 1974 When Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp decided to take the St. Louis down the path to more scholarly conclusions concerning Biblical studies, it

was as if they were two doctors who were vaccinating their patient, Concordia Seminary, against the languor and dormancy of "dead orthodoxy." Little did they know, little did anyone know, that the medicine administered to Concordia Seminary during the 1950's, in order to revitalize the institution, was in reality a cancer, the cancer of historical criticism.

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² [^] August Pieper, "Reminiscences from Professor August Pieper," WELS Historical Institute Journal, vol. 1., ho. 2., (Fall 1983), P. 56.

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⁴ [^] Carl S. Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), p. 307.

⁵ [^] Pieper, p. 56.

⁶ [^] Meyer, p. 1 .

⁷ [^] Meyer, p. 91.

⁸ [^] Meyer, pp 91 , 104.

⁹ [^] Meyer, p. 104.

¹⁰ [^] Meyer, pp. 190-191.

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¹² [^] Maier, pp. 24-25.

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²⁴ [^](#) Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955, revised ed., 1965), p. 347.

²⁵ [^](#) Weisheit, p. 94.

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²⁷ [^](#) Meyer, pp. 241-242.

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² [^](#) Marquart, p. 49.

³ [^](#) Marquart, p. 101.

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⁷ [^](#) Ibid

⁸ [^](#) Rev. A. T. Kretzmann, interview held in his home, on Wednesday afternoon, April 2, 1986.

⁹ [^](#) [^](#) Paul E. Kretzmann, in a letter to Rev. Paul Burgdorf, February 19, 1940, obtained from the papers of Rev, Curtis Peterson.

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¹⁷ [^](#) Ibid.

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¹⁸ [^](#) Ibid.

¹⁹ [^](#) Ibid.

²⁰ [^](#) Ibid.

²¹ [^](#) Herman Otten, Letter to the author, March 9, 1986.

²² [^](#) Concordia Seminary catalog, 1973-1974, pp. 15-16.

²³ [^](#) Ibid.

²⁴ [^](#) Ibid.

²⁵ [^](#) Frederick Danker, No Room in the Brotherhood, assisted by Jan Schambach, (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1977), p. 5.

²⁶ [^](#) Ibid...

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²⁸ [^](#) Klotz, Letter, February 4, 1986, p. 1.

²⁹ [^](#) Edgar Krentz, Letter to the author, January 20, 1986.

³⁰ [^](#) Horace Hummel and Martin Scharlemann, "Notes on the Valid Use of the Historico-Critical Method." (unpublished paper, ca., 1955), p. 1.

³¹ [^](#) Hummel and Scharlemann, p. 1.

³² [^](#) Hummel and Scharlemann, pp. 2-3.

³³ [^](#) Hummel and Scharlemann, p. 3.

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- ³⁶ [^](#) Hummel and Scharlemann, pp. 6-7.
- ³⁷ [^](#) Robert Preus, Letter to the author, April 2, 1986, p. 1.
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- ⁴¹ [^](#) Klotz, Letter, p. 1.
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- ⁴⁵ [^](#) Daniel Moriarity, Letter, January 28, 1986, pp. 1-2.
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⁵⁹ [^](#) Meyer, p. 285.

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NOTES ON THE VALID USE OF THE HISTORICO-CRITICAL METHOD [^](#)

[Ed. note: This paper was prepared some five years ago by Hummel and myself in an attempt to provide some basic orientation. We are happy to be able to redistribute it at this time so that it might possibly come under discussion. - Scharlemann]

1. Definition: The historico-critical method is in essence the application to Scripture of the principles of historical research and of literary criticism. It seeks to do justice to the "human side" of Scripture as well as (at least within the Church) to its "divine side" (revelatory, inspired character). It is interested not only in the historical "background" of the revelation, but seeks to see Israel's history and the Church's creation as revelation. History is not only the arena, but the stuff of revelation. History is a means of revelation as well as of redemption.

An important pre-requisite to the understanding of this historical process is the arrangement of the Biblical material in chronological order and the establishment of the relations between the various parts. This the historico-critical method seeks to do by employing scientific methods of observation, analysis, hypothesis, verification, etc. The tentative nature of many of the method's conclusions is due to the exiguity of evidence and the nature of the materials, but this does not discredit the method as such. It is justifiable (as an aspect of the usus rationis ministerialis) only because and to the extent that it aids us in understanding and interpreting Scripture. It is no more "theoretical" or "speculative" in character than traditional approaches which assumed that ancient attitudes toward authorship, forms, means of communication, etc., were identical with Western ones.

2. The historico-critical method becomes necessarily and essentially vicious or "negative" only when it proceeds from rationalistic or naturalistic assumptions such as would make the Scripture only another human book, would deny revelation, the possibility of miracle, etc.

3. The fact that many of the early practitioners of the method were such agnostics or extremists does not vitiate the method as such, where it is used within the context of the Christian faith, any more than the use of grammar, textual criticism, etc., by agnostics forbids us to make use of those disciplines.

4. The introduction of the historico-critical method also involves a clarification of what we mean by the "uniqueness" of Scripture. Earlier generations often interpreted this in such a narrow sense that it was applied not only to the theological (revealed) content of Scripture but also to the historical forms in which the revelation came. It was, accordingly, considered almost necessarily irreverent to approach Scripture at all as one might any other book, with the result that even grammatical and text-critical disciplines were sometimes looked upon with deep suspicion (and this viewpoint, unfortunately, is often considered the necessary meaning of "verbal inspiration"). Hence, the fathers were often prevented from a consistent application of their principles of

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"non-mechanical inspiration," "progressive revelation," etc. That "Scripture interprets Scripture" refers primarily to its theological message, not to the external tools of exegesis.

5. Archaeology, perhaps more than anything else in recent years, has once and for all taught us that God's people in the Biblical period cannot be considered in a cultural and ideational vacuum in isolation from their contemporaries, as tradition (partly through no fault of its own) and even classical Wellhausenism were wont to do. At the same time, we may note with gratitude that the solid, objective evidence introduced by archaeology has discredited the apriorism of much earlier scholarship, forcing most modern scholars to proceed more inductively and cautiously, and to label hypotheses more frequently as such.

6. This "other side" of archaeology also needs to be stressed: if archaeology has convinced scholarship of the "substantial historicity" of the Biblical account (pace certain early hypercritics), it has also vastly increased the complexity of the exegetical task by showing us how "old" the Old Testament (especially) really is. Hence, great care must be taken not to dismiss newer viewpoints as simply "theoretical," "speculative," etc.

7. Archaeology, then, has demonstrated both the vast gulf which separated Israel theologically from its neighbors and the phenomenal extent to which Israel used the external forms of its environment e.g., its Semitic or Greek languages, covenant, kingship (the alien origin of which and initial opposition to which the Bible also records), prophetism, sacrifice, etc. Much of Israel's history may be considered under the caption of its struggle to assimilate foreign forms without their original pagan content (to which the prophets often responded with "back to the wilderness" refrains). Furthermore, these forms often changed or developed (= progressive revelation) without substantial change of contents. Since history is an unfolding process from the Biblical viewpoint, and since God has dealt with mankind in an historical manner, the extent and character of His revelatory and redemptive activity tend to correspond with man's spiritual development.

8. Obviously, it is indispensable that the exegete enter as much as possible into the forms of antiquity in which the revelation of Scripture is couched. Not only a grammatical translation of the Biblical documents is necessary, but an "ideational translation" as well. The same words mean different things to different people at different times. The original meaning is the only possible key to and control over the "translated" meaning. The degree to which "translation" of this sort was necessary the Church seems to have begun to forget already in sub-apostolic times as it moved out of the Semitic into the Greek orbit. Everyone recognizes the innate peril of all translation, but everyone also concedes its indispensability.

9. In matters of ideational as well as grammatical translation, "equally consecrated Lutheran theologians may differ without on that account being in doctrinal disagreement." Differences of opinion as to the form of the Scriptural document or the writer's intent do not imply

any doubt of the truth of whatever is expressed, or any desire to exercise autonomy over the Scriptural revelation. This moves us out of the area of doctrinal disagreement into the sphere of "permissible exegetical difference" (in accordance with and subject to the *analogia fidei* and specifically the Lutheran Confessions, of course). The "conservative" will surely be reluctant to abandon older viewpoints without cogent evidence (where opinions will differ), he will insist on caution and sobriety, etc., but he will also refrain from labelling something as "rationalistic," etc., which need not necessarily be so.

10. We submit that such matters as historiography, "myth," attitudes toward date, authorship, and transmission of documents, etc., belong (like language, architecture, etc.) to the external forms of revelation. At any rate, we fail to see any *a priori* reasons why God could not or should not have employed them. A revelation that came in history would almost perforce (i.e., if not "mechanical") have to make use of these forms of its times. To impose our forms and presuppositions upon the ancient forms is to run the risk (to say the least) of completely misunderstanding and misapplying them. Again disagreements will be (within the Church) exegetical in nature.

11. Let us consider first the problem of ancient historiography. Obviously, there- are no "histories" in the Bible precisely like our histories, although they vary widely among themselves in similarity to our forms (cf. the "Court History of David" with the Chronicler, the synoptists with John etc.). It is really regrettable that the Hebrew designation of "former prophets" for many O.T. books was replaced by the Greek (LXX) title, "historical books." That is, the Biblical "histories" are written almost exclusively to illustrate and demonstrate a theological thesis (i.e., the prophetic doctrine of history); they are concerned more with Geschichte than with Historie. The fact that the Biblical records have been revealed in history should also mean that, as with other historical peoples, Israel's memories and traditions of its early existence have been refracted through the prisms of later experiences, determining the selection and accentuation of materials (cf. the Gospels).

12. Modern "history" on the contrary, is (for better, .or for worse) more "secular." It seeks to discover "was eigentlich geschehen ist" (E. Meyer) more than after the meaning and import of events. It is concerned with political, economic, sociological, psychological, and other factors at least as much as with the theological ones. For us to rewrite Biblical history from these standpoints does not falsify the Scriptural accounts, but is to "translate" them into the forms of modern historiography and to prevent the reader from approaching the Biblical accounts as though they had been revealed today and were complete, "objective" accounts, (thus sparing the Church many unnecessary battles in defense of the "truth" of Scripture). Of course, the Church dare never forget the theological accents of the original documents either; on the contrary, its kerygmatic needs are still the same as those which resulted in the writing, transmission, and canonization by the Church of the Biblical documents. However, when Churchmen engage in activities that are not so immediately kerygmatic (such as the writing of history), they surely must use modern forms in order to communicate (cf. Bright).

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13. It probably can be demonstrated (and, at least there is sufficient archaeological evidence to warrant one's holding this exegetical opinion) that the Biblical (Hebrew, "prelogical") approach to "truth" diverged considerably from the Greek (Aristotelian) one and even more from the modern "scientific" one. Truth is expressed not so much in forthright, prosaic propositions and in painstaking reporting of the naked facts as in "homiletical," "mythical," (however much everyone dislikes the term), tendentious, semi-poetical forms. "Pragmatic history" is not as important as "paradigmatic history" (i.e., events becoming paradigms and illustrations of the theological "truth" thus exemplified. To embellish, exaggerate (hyperbolically), or omit salient details is not, according to ancient standards, a falsification of the accounts, but an increase in their "truth!" Heilsgeschehen, aetiology, etc., may play their legitimate role, although probably minor ones. The predictive element in many prophecies lies not so much in their details as in their point of comparison (viz., the establishment of the kingdom cf. apocalyptic).

14. This, be it noted, is not the question of "inerrancy," but that of the author's own standards or intentions, by which alone he can be measured and interpreted. If this is sufficiently borne in mind, the problem of accuracy becomes a minimal one (relevant to probably less than of the total material). However, we have no difficulty even with these "errors" of Scripture, because they too are obviously on the periphery of its total intent, and we trust that the Holy Spirit, who alone guides all our exegesis, can still out of Scripture lead us "into all truth." We must distinguish between facts that count and facts that do not.

15. In this light the problem of the N.T.'s use of the O.T. should also be approached. Again, the ancient writers should not be invoked to provide answers to questions which they did not confront. A historical revelation would mean that the N.T. authors (and probably by analogy our Lord as well) cite and refer to O.T. books according to their current designations; the modern discipline of isagogics is scarcely known until the 19th century (cf. also the N.T.'s frequent use of the LXX, with apparent innocence of modern text-critical disciplines). Secondly, because the N.T. writers were uninterested in the bare facts of history in our more "secular" sense, they apparently do not attempt to state the original meaning or give a "historical exegesis" of O.T. texts, but are rather concerned with their contemporary, "filled (=πληρωμα)" meaning. They attempt to show how all of God's previous activity has now reached a climax in the "coming near of the Kingdom." In retrospect, it became clear just what God had been doing in past history and it was (and is) possible to give a "spiritual" meaning (i.e., the Holy Spirit's ultimate intent) to earlier words, above and beyond their immediate, historical meaning (but historical exegesis still remaining indispensable as a control over this "extended" meaning.) Thus, the N.T. writers, using the methodology of their times, restate ("homiletically"?) in terms of their fuller revelation what the ancient texts would mean if they had been revealed in their own age, they draw (legitimate) conclusions from O.T. premises, etc. Their quotes of the O.T. are random, but typical (cf. the ethical directives of the N.T.), thus teaching us what we must do to the entire O.T. if we are not to abandon its use to the synagogue or succumb to "historicism." The archaeological and philological controls

over O.T. exegesis would seem to lend enough plausibility to this thesis that the Christian exegete would at least have the option to apply the principle that "Scriptura sui ipsius interpres est" in this way to the N.T.'s use of the O.T. without denying the "truth"¹¹ of the N.T. or impairing the linear unity of God's revelatory and soteriological activity recorded in both testaments.

15. Among the ancient forms *of* Scripture, which it is a constant struggle for us to understand and evaluate properly, must probably (and at least may, it would seem, in the light of comparative materials) be included the use of saga, legend, myth, pseudepigraphy, vaticinium ex eventu, etc.,—all of which appear to us to be "false", but hardly so by the standards of antiquity and presumably then not of Scripture either—seen as historical revelation. This may be compared somewhat to the use throughout Scripture of various kinds of parabolic material—and even of fables (cf. Judges 9 and II Kings 14.). We feel that that hermeneutical rule which insists that these Gattungen must always be labelled as such is an extra-Scriptural one which at least may not be insisted upon as an article of faith (hence possible applications to Jonah, Daniel, the Samson and Elisha pericopes, the angel vs. Sennacherib, the visit of the Magi, etc.). That is, there is again here an area of permissible, exegetical disparity without any necessary doubt or denial of Scripture's truth (as measured by the original intent). (Cf. also the traditional Lutheran hermeneutics of the apocalyptic literature.)

16. The question of "how far" is an important one. Even if the Lutheran Confessions as taken seriously did not provide a sufficient answer to these problems, two major criteria may be advanced: (1) that of presuppositions (cf. ^2: the evidence of "faith"), and (2) "by their fruits shall ye know them," i.e., any application must be rejected which results in simple moralism (some aspects of Bultmanism), a denial of the basic historical matrices of the revelation (Exodus, exile, incarnation, resurrection, etc.), a relativization of all truth, etc. Until very cogent evidence is available in one direction or the other, we doubt that greater specificity is possible, i.e., both viewpoints will have to be viewed as hypothetical, and responsible exegetical freedom will have to be permitted. If the method is thus used conservatively, we feel certain that no doctrines of the Lutheran Church will be at stake. That the line between exegetical and doctrinal differences cannot be drawn more sharply is really nothing new; we have always attempted to distinguish the basic from the peripheral (cf. resurrection vs. John the Baptist's "faith"). Any hermeneutics may be abused (the ancient literalism just as much as the contemporary historico-critical method); we shall continue to insist on correct use, as always.

Of course, as we recognize the constant trend of earlier dogmatics to become precise beyond Scriptural warrant, we must beware of the opposite extreme. It may be pointed out, however, that with the near- universal acceptance of the historico-critical method, modern Christendom has probably achieved far greater unanimity in the interpretation of Scripture than at any other time since the Reformation when more literalistic methodologies were in vogue—so obvious is the main thrust of the Biblical documents (= perspicuitas).

17. Modern accents on "myth" are to be understood as a species of anthropomorphism or theologoumenon, without which it would simply be impossible for God to communicate to man. Just as God's nature must be described anthropomorphically ("hear, smell, sit," etc.) without any concern whether this is literalistically true, so the supra-historical framework in which the historical revelation is set must be described in analogy (of course, of the writer's own time); thus heaven-" new Jerusalem, all eschatology in the nature of the case almost merges with apocalyptic; the "truth" of creation must be described in supra-historical forms, etc. The basically anthropomorphic character of all theology is not diminished by even the most philosophic or sophisticated expression. And usually we must admit that no modern "myth" will express the inexpressible truths of revelation any better than those employed in Scripture. For us to trace their origin and genesis (even in the "praeparatio evangelica" of paganism) is not to deprecate their truth. And for us to say that they are supra-historical implies not the slightest doubt of that which they report (cf. resurrection, ascension). In fact, myth is of indispensable value in universalizing the particulars of revelatory history; like poetry, it expresses a truth which no literal prose ever can.

The Biblical meaning attached to the symbols is based on the prophetic and apostolic interpretation of history; man's experience of God's ways in history gives him an analogy for concretizing his faith in the supra- history when the same Lord of history will finally consummate all His activity in history.

Many Bultmanite applications of demythologization are certainly to be rejected, but we cannot dodge the questions he has raised. Thus the skandalon of Christianity is to be measured against the Biblical, not the modern environment (cf. perhaps the Biblical world-view, plagues as divine visitation, demonic possession, miracle, ascension, sacrifice, etc.). However, we must reject Bultman's axiom that myth has only anthropological, not cosmological, value; the symbol dare not be divorced from the reality it represents (in the constant fashion of antiquity); etc.

18. Espousal of the historico-critical method by no means involves acceptance of its extremes and excrescences (abusus non tollit usum), most of which have become fairly obvious today, even to practitioners of the method who have few theological concerns, and most of which have been (and still are being) corrected in the course of time (historicism, concern with detail as an end rather than a means, etc.) Among contemporary practitioners of the method whom, it seems to us, Lutherans might well emulate (on the whole) we may mention most modern Roman Catholic exegetes (deVaux, McKenzie; cf. CBQ), Bright, G. E. Wright, Filson, Schniewind, etc.

19. Thus, the historico-critical method teaches us again what it means "to live by faith alone" (i.e., not sight or rational proof), at the same time that it gives us an invaluable key to the original intent and thus also to the contemporary interpretation and application of Scripture. It enhances our appreciation of the magnitude of God's condescension, climaxing in the incarnation of His Son. And it enables the Church today

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better to interpret contemporary events as part of the same historical process recorded in Scripture leading up to the great eschatological denouement.

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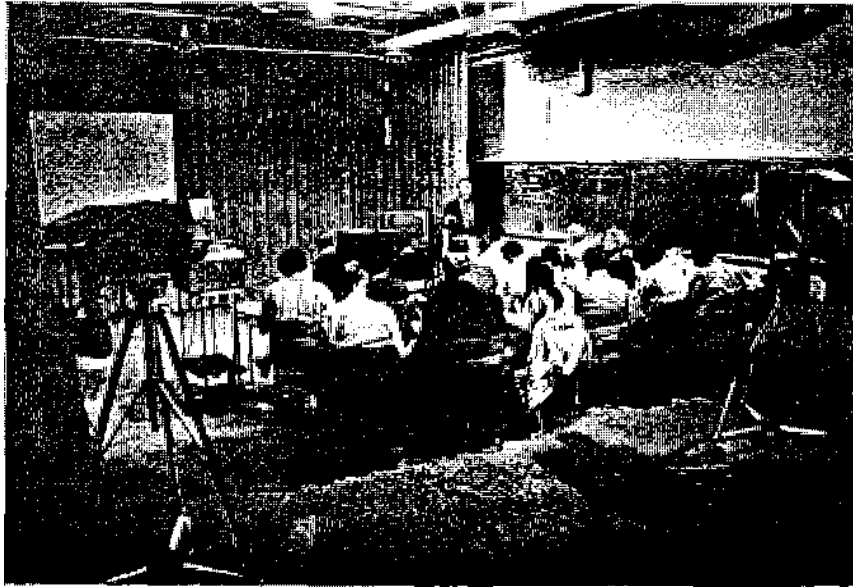
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Professor of Systematic Theology

St. John's College, Winfield, Kans. (diploma, 1924); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (M.Div., 1927; Graduate School, 1927-28); University of Nebraska (M.A., 1931); Graduate Fellow, Indiana University (1932); Southwestern College, Winfield, Kans. (SS, 1938); University Graduate Fellow, University of Wisconsin, Madison (1944-45); University of Wisconsin, Madison (SS, 1939-42; 1944-45; 1951-52); Washington University, St. Louis (1959-60); University of Heidelberg, Germany (1968-69); Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. (D.D., 1966); pastor, Calvary, Indianapolis, Ind. (1931-38); professor, St. John's College, Winfield, Kans. (1938-52); instructor, University of Wisconsin, Madison (1944-45); pastor, Calvary, Wellington, Kans. (1946-52); professor, Concordia Seminary since 1953; registrar (1960-69).



PROFESSORS EMERITI

VICTOR A. BARTLING, M. A., D. D.

Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis. (diploma, 1916); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, (diploma, 1919); Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis. (M. A., 1942); Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. (D. D., 1957); pastor, Zion, Bismarck, and St. Paul's, Driscoll, N. Dak. (1919-24); Grace, Fargo, N. Dak. (1924-26); professor, Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis. (1926-50); professor, Concordia Seminary (1950-72).

PAUL M. BRETSCHER, Ph. D., S.T.D., Litt. D.

Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis. (diploma, 1912); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, (diploma, 1915); American Conservatory of Music, Chicago (diploma, 1918); University of Chicago (M. A., 1928; Ph. D., 1936); Concordia Seminary, Adelaide, South Australia (S. T. D. 1964); Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind. (Litt.D., 1965); assistant professor at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill. (1915-18); pastor, Gospel, Milwaukee, Wis., (1918-23); professor, Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill. (1923-41); professor, Concordia Seminary (1941-69); graduate professor (1955-68).

WALTER E. BUSZIN, M. S. M., S.T.M., Mus. D.

Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Ind. (diploma, 1919); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, (diploma, 1924; M.Div., 1925; S.T.M., 1941); Northwestern University, Chicago (1927-29); graduate work at Union Theological Seminary, New York (M. S. M., 1937); Valparaiso University (Mus. D. *honoris causa*, 1954); assistant professor, Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. (1925-27); professor, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minn. (1929-35); professor, Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Ind. (1937-46); professor, Concordia Teacher's College, River Forest, Ill. (1946-47); professor, Concordia Seminary (1947-66).

ALFRED M. REHWINKEL, M. A., B. D., LL. D.

Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis. (diploma, 1907); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, (diploma, 1910); University of Alberta, Canada (B. A., 1916; M. A., 1918); St. Stephen's Theological College, Edmonton (B.D., 1919); graduate work at University of Toronto, University of Wisconsin, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., and Valparaiso University Valparaiso, Ind. (LL. D., 1947); pastor, Trinity, Pincher Creek, Alta., Canada (1910-14) St. Peter's, Edmonton, Alta., Canada (1914-22); professor, Concordia College, Edmonton, (1922-28); president, St. John's College, Winfield, Kans. (1928-36); professor, Concordia Seminary (1936-65); director of graduate studies (1944-54).

WALTER R. ROEHRS, Ph. D., D. D.

Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wis. (diploma, 1920); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, (diploma, 1925); University of Chicago (M. A., 1926; Ph. D., 1934); Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. (D. D., 1963); pastor, Grace, Western Springs, Ill. (1926-30); professor St. Paul's College, Concordia, Mo. (1930-41); professor, Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill. (1941-44); professor, Concordia Seminary (1944-68); managing editor of *Concordia Theological Monthly* (1954-64).

PHILIP J. SCHROEDER, M. A.

Lutheran Theological Seminary, Wauwatosa, Wis. (diploma, 1923); New Mexico Highland University (B. A., 1949; M. A., 1949); instructor at Highlands University (1948); University of Oregon (1949-51); Washington University, St. Louis (1957—); pastor, Trinity, Marshfield, Wis. (1923-42); service center pastor (1942-43); U. S. Army Chaplain (1943-46); pastor, Immanuel, Las Vegas, N. Mex. (1946-49); Trinity, La Junta, Colo. (1950-53); instructor Concordia Seminary (1953-57); assistant professor (1957-69).

LEWIS WM. SPITZ, Ph. D., D. D.

Concordia College, Fort Wayne, Ind. (diploma, 1915); Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, (diploma, 1918); Washington University, St. Louis (M. A., 1930); University of Colorado Boulder, Colo. (SS, 1930-'31, '32); University of Chicago (Ph. D., 1943); Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Ill. (D. D., 1964); pastor, St. John's, Lovell, Wyo. (1918-21); St. Paul's, Bertrand, Neb. (1921-24); Trinity, Blue Hill, Neb. (1924-25); professor, xxxxxxxx (1925-46); professor Concordia Seminary (1946-71)

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117N ^
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. Edgar Krentz
5433 S. Ridgewood Ct.
Chicago, IL 60615

Dear Dr. Krentz:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I have chosen as a topic for my senior church history paper: "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." I remember reading somewhere that Dr. Martin Scharlemann introduced the historical critical method to St. Louis when he began teaching there in 1952, and that you learned it from him when you began teaching in 1953. Is this true Dr. Krentz? As a fellow Christian, I do not want to write anything in my paper that will defame or injure your good name. What I am asking YOU to do is to use the self-addressed, stamped envelope and write back with your answers and insight to the questions I have raised. I am asking you to give your account of what happened at St. Louis in the exegetical department during the years you taught there. Since my paper is due at the beginning of April, I would appreciate a reply within a month. A man of your academic credentials taking time out from a busy schedule to help a seminary student is greatly appreciated! May the Lord of the church bless you in your ministry.

Yours and His,

Joel L. Pless

Lutheran School of Theology
at Chicago

Tel: (312) 753-0752

1100 East 55th St.
Chicago, Illinois
60615-5199

20 January 1986 [^](#)

Mr. Joel L. Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle, 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Re: Your letter postmarked 15 January

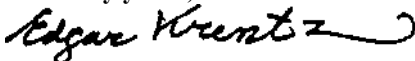
Dear Mr. Pless:

I received your letter asking for information about the introduction of the historical critical method into the classrooms of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

I have now been removed from the unfortunate controversy in the LCMS for a decade, and from the early years of teaching at Concordia Seminary [St. Louis] by over thirty years. At this time both my interests and time are devoted to other topics in biblical studies. For that reason I will not use the opportunity to respond to your questions about Missouri Synod history.

There is quite a bit of material in the public domain. You would probably find more at the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis. You might ask them for a copy of "Notes on the valid use of the Historical Critical Method" by Martin H. Scharlemann and Horace Hummel, presented to the faculty about 1955 and redistributed to the faculty about 5 years later.

Cordially yours,



Edgar Krentz
Christ Seminary—Seminex
Professor of New Testament

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N [^]
Mequon, WI 53092

Professor Daniel Moriarity
419 Pine Brae Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

Dear Professor Moriarity:

Greetings to you from Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my senior church history paper on how the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Through my research, I have nearly come to the conclusion that Professor Martin Scharlemann learned elements of the historical critical method while attending the Princeton Theological Institute during the summer of 19[^]9 and that he introduced the historical critical method to Concordia soon after he arrived in 1952. Is this true, or is there more to it than that?

Most of the professors here believe Dr. Scharlemann remained a closet historical critic the rest of his life. Can you shed any light on that accusation? Undoubtedly you had him for a professor. Was he orthodox when you had him? I have also found evidence that Edgar Krentz, Frederick Danker, and Ralph Klein were among the most blatant proponents of the historical critical method when you were a student at St. Louis, 1970-1974. Is this true?

What I am asking YOU to do is use the self-addressed, stamped envelope and write back and give me your valuable insight on the questions I have raised. Since my paper is due in April, I would appreciate a reply within a month.

I know you are busy working on your doctorate in Near Eastern studies, so please write back when you have time.

Everything is fine here at the seminary. David Sweet is now pastor of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church, La Crosse, WI. Jim and Martha Sherod are now living in Houston, Texas, They will be returning to Mequon this summer.

(Jim was not sure if he wanted to be a pastor, so he took a couple years off). Luke Biggs is associate pastor at Immanuel, Cedarburg, a couple miles up the road from me. He is doing fine, married, two children. All three of your former students here are/were among the top students in their classes. You and Paul Raabe taught us well. My now month old Christmas letter should let you know what I have been doing since I left Ann Arbor. Your taking time out to help a former student is greatly appreciated! Give my kind regards to your wife Linda, Danny, and Becky.

Yours and His

Joel L. Pless
Joel L. Pless

January 28, 1986 [^](#)

419 Pine Brae Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2743

Mr. Joel Pless
64717 W. Wartburg Circle
117N Mequon, WI 53092

Dear Joel,

Thanks for your kind letter. I, too, am enclosing our Christmas letter, so that you can get caught, up on the Moriarity family.

Now in response to your questions raised for your senior church history paper:

I really can't say whether. Dr. Scharlemann, was the person who introduced the historical-critical method to Concordia Seminary or not. However, I do remember hearing Dr. Lewis Spitz (the) elder mention during the: "hub-bub" of the "war years" in Louis (1974-75), when so many on the (then) faculty majority were, pointing the finger at Dr. Scharlemann, that it; was really Drs. Arthur Repp and A. O. Fuerbringer (former president of Concordia Seminary) who instigated the movement to "open up" the faculty to more scholarly conclusions. Dr. Spitz reported to a small group of us once that he overheard Drs. Repp and Fuerbringer talking as they were walking home behind him one evening after classes. Dr. Repp mentioned that something was going to have to be done to "modernize" the faculty. The conclusion was reached that if the faculty were going to prepare pastors for a modern ministry, they were going to have to go to .accredited universities for their advanced degrees. It also seems to me that he said that in that same discussion there was concern expressed about the academic credentials of the faculty and how this affected the educational standing of the seminary (accreditation was part of this discussion),

Now Dr. Spitz and most of us realized that at one time Dr. Scharlemann did circulate papers in our synod that contained false doctrine, but the real impetus for bringing in the historical-critical method on the campus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, — in Dr. Spitz' opinion, as I remember correctly — was due to the encouragement given by the (then) president and academic dean of the Seminary. By the way, I have never seen these papers, since Dr. Scharlemann stopped their circulation in 1962, I believe. There was a sem student who wrote a paper where he needed to examine these papers, and who did get permission from Mrs. (Dorothy) Scharlemann after his death, in order to write his paper. This paper was written sometime in the last five or six years.

Joel, I'm no historian and much less have all the details to answer all your questions. You might get excellent help from Dr. August Suelflow of the Concordia Historical Institute on campus at the seminary in St. Louis for your papers I'm sure there have been papers written just on this topic of how the historical-critical method was introduced on campus.

Anyway, getting back to your question whether Dr. Scharlemann remained a 'closet historical critic' the rest of his life. My impression is no he didn't. Let me share some facts I know: After John Tietjen was elected president of the seminary, Dr. Scharlemann was the professor who wrote to President Jacob Preus, calling for an investigation of the seminary and its theological stance. He underwent extreme enmity from the faculty because of this request; he was officially censured by the faculty in 1970. It was at this time that the synod first knew that there was a faculty 'majority' and a faculty 'minority.' If he was a "closet historical critic" during those very painful years (to the point of eventually having a nervous breakdown in 1974 when he was the acting president of the seminary and was receiving crank calls at all hours of the night), it would seem so highly ridiculous to go through all that turmoil and tribulation.

As far as ray personally hearing any such teaching from him, I only had one course with him on the Parables. It was excellent. When some students talked about the differences between the gospels' accounts of the same parables, instead of giving the usual liberal answer that these were mere inventions of the early church, rather, he argued that Jesus had to have told these parables frequently, in more than one setting, and it was left to the evangelist (guided by the Holy Spirit) which version of the parable he would use in his gospel. This seemed to me to be a fair answer, and certainly not the typical answer of a higher critic. I really have to say that I never experienced any aberrations of doctrine in his teaching in the classroom, nor in private conversations. I also knew him as my division chairman when I taught Greek and Hebrew at the seminary in 1974-75. I cannot remember any support given for the historical-critical method. In fact, he

- 1 -

often used to counter that Lutherans use the historical-grammatical method. I have a strong hunch that he coined the term or at least used it rather frequently.

Having said all the above, I know there is a cloud around those papers he wrote and circulated. As I understand it, he never retracted the doctrine that was in then; he just apologized for disturbing the Church and stopped circulating those papers. Like I said, I never read then; I really don't know what their topic (or topics) was (or were). I'm sure if you got a hold of the Proceedings of the Cleveland Convention of 1962 (or Detroit Convention of 1965?, I'm not really sure), there ought to be something about those papers in the Proceedings.

In response to the orthodoxy of Edgar Krentz, Frederick Danker and Ralph Klein, these men clearly belonged to the "faculty majority" in 1971-1974. Dr. Krentz was often thought to be the "ghost" writer for Dr. Tietjen on occasion. I had him for my Introduction to Exegesis and Pauline Epistles courses. In EQ-100 (Introduction to Exegesis), he definitely said we would be learning the historical-critical method. I had Dr. Danker for my honors course on the (Synoptic) Gospels. He thought Elizabeth sang the Magnificat, believed in the priority of Mark, the source hypothesis for the Gospels (Q, L, M, etc.) and challenged the class to contradict him in the same scholarly fashion with one week's notice to do our research. In my final paper in that course, I showed that the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament was wrong in saying that there was no crucifixion theology in the Gospels, for which he gave me a grade of "B" saying I proved my point, but the paper was too short. Dr. Klein was a typical liberal, not only in theology, but also in politics. In my honors course in the Latter Prophets, he said Matthew was "wrong" in saying that Isaiah 7:14 applied to Jesus. In our discussion about Amos, the only application he could make was for the war in Vietnam, although I questioned this in class. In another class (Ugaritic), he jokingly said that when Adam swung off the tree and walked upright for the first time, he probably spoke Proto-Semitic. (I was told that he was a proponent of the so-called theistic evolutionary hypothesis). There have been efforts to identify these professors with the transcripts in; the "Blue" book published by Pres. Preus. I never have found out how reliable those identifications were.

Well, this is just a very brief rambling answer to your letter. I still think that if you would talk to Dr. Suelflow at the Concordia Historical Institute, he would at least guide you in the right direction for other documents that would support much of what I have written here. I hope this helps.

God's richest blessings on your work. Maybe one day our synods will return to fellowship.

In Christ,:

Rev. Daniel T. Moriarity

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117N ^
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. Ewald J. Otto
712 Kenwood Quincy,
IL 62310

Dear Dr. Otto:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. My parents and I have been dedicated readers of Affirm since we became deeply concerned about the doctrinal problems in the Missouri Synod over a decade ago. We are now members of the Wisconsin Synod. In the latest issue of Affirm, dated December 1985, you write: "We appreciate your comments even when you disagree with us. We do our best to answer you honestly and forthrightly. We try not any mail go unanswered." you were bold enough to last sentence in print, Otto, I am now going to to it!

Rev. Daniel T. Amant
1985-12-15 10:10 AM

to let
Since
put that
Dr.
hold you

I am writing my senior church history paper on the topic: "How the historical critical method was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through my research, I have nearly come to the conclusion that Professor Martin Scharlemann learned elements of the historical critical method while he was studying at Princeton in the summer of 1949, and that he introduced the historical critical method to the classrooms of St. Louis soon after he began teaching there in 1952. Is this true, Dr. Otto? Since you have been a member of the seminary board of control for a number of years, I believe you can give me some valuable insight to the questions I have raised, or at least point me in the right direction to find the answers. Any of your comments on the whole Seminex "affair" I would find exceedingly valuable. Please use the enclosed self addressed stamped envelope in sending your reply.

After reading Exodus from Concordia, I can only admire you for the firm stand you and your colleagues on the board of control took for confessional Lutheranism against the faculty majority. Perhaps this is the first time you have ever corresponded with someone in the Wisconsin Synod. I hope your opinion of our synod is a favorable one.

Since my paper is due at the beginning of April, I would appreciate a reply within a month. I know you are very busy, so please write when you have time. Thank you for taking time out from your busy schedule to help a seminary student with his studies. May our Epiphany king keep you in his care.

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel L. Pless

Joel L. Pless



'I believed,
and therefore have
I spoken" 2 Cor.
4:13

c/o Walther Memorial Lutheran Church
4040 West Fond du Lac Avenue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53216

Rev. E. J. OTTO
712 KENWOOD
QUINCY, ILLINOIS 62301

Jan. 30 ^

Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle
117N Mequon, WI 53092

Fellow hod carrier in the Lord's building project.....

Your (undated) letter came a few days ago. The AFFIRM mail runs fairly heavy, I answer it all, and do my own dubious typing (saves overhead). I need to average five to seven letters a day out of here in order to keep even, as it were. So answers must be as short as a garrulous old man can make them!

Ergo, to horse:

1. At Missouri's synodical convention in 1973 the election of layman Al Briel and myself gave the school's Board of Regents a slim 6-5 conservative majority. Previously there was a liberal majority. We were thus able to follow up on some crucial doctrinal resolutions which resulted, 14 months later, in the removal of the seminary president Tietjen. Meanwhile, 45 walk-out striking profs were fired for not working. They, of course, all subscribed to Tietjen's doctrinal (historical-critical) position. But it was fortunate that we didn't have to deal with each one as an individual case. We'd still be at it!

2. But, while at the very center of those agonizing and gut-wrenching days, I had no time—believe me—to go into the historical questions of how the faculty got where it was. However, I can make a few points and point you to some other sources.

3. In 1973 I was told that the beginnings of the liberal theology at the Sem went back some 30 years or so. This would take you beyond Dr. Scharlemann and 1952. Parenthetically, I'll say what you probably know, namely that Dr. Scharlemann (Martin that is. There's a liberal Robert) came—thank God—to a full turn and was a leader among the faithful five who took the Sem and its problems to the then new synodical president, Dr. J.A.O. Preus. Scharlemann's days as acting president, following the suspension of Tietjen, were crucial to the successful return of the school to the old paths.

4. How far back ahead of 1952 do the h-c beginnings go? Can they be pinned to one person? I doubt it. You have read Exodus from Concordia. Good. Now—if you don't have it—get Prof. Kurt Marquart's 170-page book, Anatomy of an Explosion. It deals with the doctrinal issues and

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life " Revelation 2:10

goes back to European roots of liberalism, then to development in the U.S., and finally into the Missouri Synod. The book was published in 1977. The forward says it can be bought from the Ft. Wayne Sem bookstore for a mere \$1. I trust that still holds true.

Write to:

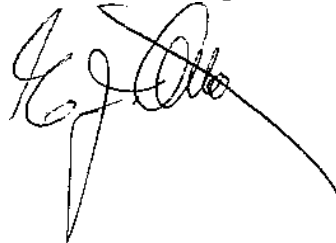
Concordia Theo. Seminary Press
6600 N. Clinton
Ft. Wayne, Indiana 46825.

That book is a must for you and your church history paper.

5. One other bit of help: Dr. John Klotz is head of the Graduate School at our St. Louis Sem. He has an amazing memory and a historical bent of mind. Also, he's close to some of the retired profs who were there at the time of the walk-out. All of which is to say I'm taking the liberty of forwarding your letter to him and also a copy of this letter of mine. I'm sure he'll be of help with your specific question, namely, "How the historical critical method was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary St. Louis."

Given my ignorance of the background, I'll still be bold enough to say that I feel that your answer (thus far) as given in the second paragraph of your letter to me is far too simplistic. It was cooking way ahead of Scharlemann.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'E. J. Klotz', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Copy to Dr. John Klotz



SCHOOL FOR GRADUATE STUDIES

801 DE MUN AVENUE SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI 63105 TELEPHONE: (314) 721-5934

February 4, 1986 ^

Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle
117N Mequon, WI 53092

Dear Joel,

Dr. Otto has asked that I respond to your letter of January 30. I am glad to do so.

There were concerns expressed over the theology of the faculty at Concordia Seminary beginning in 1945. At the 1950 convention a number of overtures (Memorials) referred to what was being taught at the St. Louis Seminary. In addition there were three specific memorials asking that the doctrinal position of members of the faculty and what was being taught at Concordia Seminary St. Louis be investigated by the Synod. As you know Dr. Scharlemann joined the faculty in September 1952. It is clear that at least a mild form of historical criticism had begun some years before that time. The concerns did not begin only after he joined the faculty.

I don't recall when I first became acquainted with Dr. Scharlemann. I suspect it was very shortly after he began his teaching at Concordia Seminary. At the time I was a member of the faculty of Concordia College River Forest. He was chairman of the Committee on Scholarly Research which sponsored the production of my book, "Genes, Genesis and Evolution." Subsequently I became a member of that committee, and I got to know Dr. Scharlemann quite well. I believe it is fair to say that he became enamored of historical criticism, and there is little doubt that he referred to its techniques and procedures in his teaching. I shared some of the concerns that the sainted Dr. Becker had regarding some of the materials he wrote (I assume you had the privilege of knowing Dr. Becker) Dr. Scharlemann and I still remained good friends. My theological position was that of Dr. Becker, not that of Dr. Scharlemann.

Subsequently, Dr. Scharlemann apologized to the synodical convention for the problems which his papers raised, and he withdrew them. I don't believe that at that time he was convinced his approach was wrong, but he certainly did admit that it was confusing, misleading, and easily misunderstood.

A SEMINARY OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD - FOUNDED 1839

Dr. Scharlemann later became one of the champions of orthodox Lutheranism. In the 70's he began to speak out publicly and to warn against the dangers of historical criticism. He was particularly concerned with the fact that it was being presented at Concordia Seminary. It was Dr. Scharlemann who requested President Preus to institute an investigation of the theology being presented at Concordia Seminary. He was the leader of the faithful five who stood in opposition to the faculty majority. I got to know him very well during those crisis-filled days and was in day to day contact with him after I joined the faculty in 1974. I can only say that he took the same position over against historical criticism as Dr. Becker did. I refer to Dr. Becker because you probably knew him. He was my next door neighbor at River Forest and a member of the same congregation that I was. Our children grew up together.

In any case Dr. Scharlemann not only cautioned against historical criticism in the classroom but publicly warned against it again and again. It is my conviction that his responsibilities as professor of New Testament exegesis drove him into the Word and that as he studied the Word he recognized that historical criticism could not be reconciled with orthodox Christianity.

I hope this will be helpful to you. We have had some difficult days in the Missouri Synod but by God's grace we have returned to the Biblical way. Dr. Otto, the members of our Board of Regents, and AFFIRM, which Dr. Otto represents, played an important part in that return.

Sincerely yours,

John W. Klotz

JWK:la

cc Dr. Otto

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N ^
Mequon, WI 53092

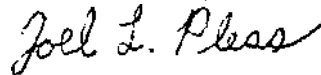
Professor Carl Lawrenz
494 Grove Street
Lomira, WI 53048

Dear Professor Lawrenz:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. I am writing my senior church history paper on how the historical critical method entered into the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Since I will be in Lomira this Friday afternoon, January 31st, visiting a teacher at St. John Lutheran School, may I stop at your house at 2:00 PM and ask you a few questions about my topic? I want to know especially about how Alfred von Rohr Sauer, Walter Wegner, Gilbert Thiele, and Philip Schroeder became historical critics. I think if anyone would know it would be you.

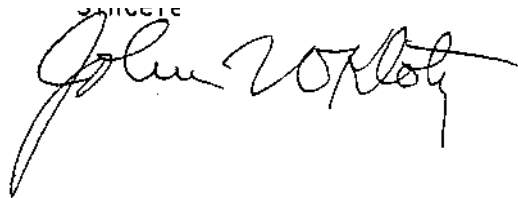
I hope to find you at home Friday afternoon. If you cannot be home, feel free to call me collect anytime after six in the evening, so we can arrange to meet another time. My phone number is (414) - 258-2439.
Thank you for your time.

Yours and His,



Joel L. Pless

ORIGINAL



6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N ^
Mequon, WI 53092

Rev. Dr. Lorenz Wunderlich
2072 Kiwi Court Oviedo,
FL 32765

Dear Dr. Wunderlich:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, WI. I am writing my senior church history paper on how the historical critical method entered into the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Through my research, I have nearly come to the conclusion that Professor Martin Scharlemann learned elements of the historical critical method while he was attending summer school at Princeton in 1949. When he began teaching at St. Louis in 1952, he then began teaching in his classes the historical critical method. One other source I read speaks of Professor Edgar Krentz as learning the historical critical method from Dr. Scharlemann at St. Louis. All this happened supposedly in the early 1950's. Is any of this true Dr. Wunderlich? Since you began teaching at St. Louis in 1953, I believe you will be able to offer some valuable insight on the questions I have raised.

Since you were one of the members of the faculty minority, you and your colleagues will always be held in high esteem by the faculty and students of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for your stand for confessional Lutheranism. In answering my letter, please use the self addressed stamped envelope which is enclosed. Since my paper is due in early April, I would appreciate a reply within a month. I hope to hear from you soon, may the Lord keep you in his care in your retirement.

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel L. Pless
Joel L. Pless

February 8, 1986 [^]
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. J. A. O. Preus
Route 1
Garfield, AR 72731

Dear Dr. Preus:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. You and I met when I was still a boy at St. John Lutheran Church. Rochester, Michigan, formerly my home congregation. You also preached at the dedication service of my high school, Lutheran High North, and at my college graduation, Concordia, Ann Arbor.

I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical critical method entered the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence I have been told that Drs. Alfred Fuerbringer Arthur Repp were the ones who instigated bringing the historical critical method into the classroom teaching at St. Louis in the early 1950's, and that Dr. Martin Scharlemann was an early proponent of it. Do you know if any of this is true. Dr. Preus? I would think you would be in a position to know.

What I am kindly asking YOU to do is to use the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope to write back and answer the questions I have raised, or at least point me in the right direction to find the answers. I know you are busy translating a work by Martin Chemnitz, so please write when you have the time. My paper is due in April, so I would appreciate an answer within a month. A man of your credentials taking time out to help a WELS seminary student with his studies is greatly appreciated.

Yours and His, in the spirit of the
old Synodical Conference.

Joel L. Pless

Joel L. Pless

February 8, 1986 ^
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. J. A. O. Preus
Route 1
Garfield, AR 72731

Dear Dr. Preus:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. You and I met when I was still a boy at St. John Lutheran Church, Rochester, Michigan, formerly at my home congregation. You also preached at the dedication 'service' of my high school, Lutheran High North, and at my college graduation, Concordia, Ann Arbor.

I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical critical method entered the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence I have been told that Drs. Alfred Fuerbringer Arthur Repp were the ones who instigated bringing the historical critical method into the classroom teaching at St. Louis in the early 1950's, that Dr. Martin Scharlemann was an early proponent of it. Do you know if any of this is true, Dr. Preus? I would think you would be in a position to know.

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Yours and His, in the
spirit of the did Synodical
Conference,

Joel L. Pless

Dear Joel - It was nice to hear from you.
 I'll do the best I can - Fuerb. & Repp as pres. &
 Dean of the Sem hired many profs who either favored
 or permitted the H.C. method. I am sure they
 personally accepted it. They were probably
 encouraged to do so by Scharlemann & others.
 Scharlemann delivered several papers in
 Synod supporting the HCM, but was compelled
 to apologize for disturbing the church over
 this at our 1962 Cleveland convention. I
 was there (and) heard the whole thing. I do not
 know if S. (Scharlemann) ever changed his mind, but
 he was a changed man after that
 time & by 1969 was actively opposing both
 his old colleagues and the theology they
 espoused. So S. (Scharlemann) played a role in introducing
 the HCM but he was not solely responsible
 & he later opposed it. At the time of the
 walk-out all of the exegetes to my knowledge
 held the view (and) the rest of the faculty
 either held it or permitted it. Thank
 God all that has changed.

Hope this helps
 Sincerely
 J. Preus

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 walk-out all of the exegetes to my knowledge
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 God all that has changed.

Hope this helps
 Sincerely
 J.[ack?] Preus

February 8, 1986 [^]
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117N
Mequon, WI 53092

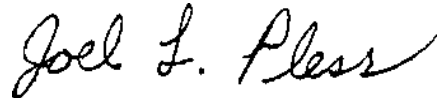
Dr. August Suelflow
Director, Concordia Historical Institute
801 De Mun Avenue St. Louis, MO
63105

Dear Dr. Suelflow:

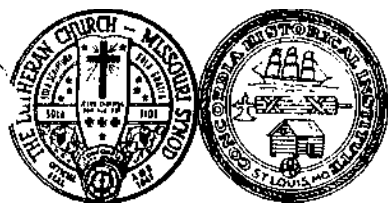
I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my senior church history paper on how the historical critical method entered the teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Through previous correspondence, I was instructed to write to you and request on loan, the paper: "Notes on the valid use of the Historical Critical Method," by Martin Scharlemann and Horace Hummel. Is it possible for you to send me this paper on loan? I would be happy to pay postage or copying costs. If you could list, any other sources to help me find further information on my topic, I would greatly appreciate it.

My paper is due in April, so I would appreciate a reply as soon as possible. Please use the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. Thank you for taking time out from your busy schedule to help a seminary student. May our Lenten king bless you in your work

Yours and His, in the
spirit of the old
Synodical Conference,



Joel L. Pless



Concordia Historical Institute

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

801 DeMun Avenue established 1847 • incorporated 1927 **St. Louis, Missouri 63105**

Tel. No. 314-721-5934 sta. 320

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26 March 86 ^

Joel L. Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N.
Mequon, WI 53092

Reply to your request of 6 Mar 86
Re: Scharlemann papers

Dear Mr. Pless,

We are pleased to enclose the response of our Research Department to your request addressed to us on 6 Mar 86, and we gratefully acknowledge the receipt of \$1.75 as payment of the service charge. We also appreciate your patience.

If you have not yet become a Member of the Concordia Historical Institute, please thoughtfully consider the invitation in the brochure. Only as more people with interests like yours become personally involved in preserving and researching Lutheran history will we have the resources to improve the quality of our services. Finally, if you have any questions about the report enclosed, please feel free to write us. We are thankful for this opportunity to be of service to you.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Kurt A. Bodling
Reference and Research Assistant

I hope the enclosed material is pertinent to your needs and sufficient for your paper. CHI would be pleased to receive a copy of your work if you desire.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Rev. Mark J. Schreiber
Coord, of Ref. Services

111 Delrex Blvd. ^
Georgetown, Ontario
L7G 4C5
CANADA

Dear Joel!

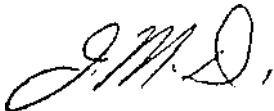
Greetings in the Lord. Thank you for your letter of Feb. 9, which reached me today. I am glad that things are going well for you. The only thought that mars your letter is that you may be taken in by the WELS false doctrine on church and ministry. But since you have followed my articles in CN I will not belabor that point now. I remember you fondly from Ann Arbor, and am glad that all is well with you.

I am returning the envelope you sent me, as US postage is not valid in Canada or on mail coming from Canada. That will not be a problem for me for long, as I have accepted a call to be pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, R.R. #1, Box 57, Bluffs, Illinois, 62621. Since we are moving next week, God willing, I do not have time to give you a longer answer now.

In addition to the sources you mentioned, the only thing I could suggest is that you go into old issues of the Concordia Theological Monthly to see the progress of false doctrine among the seminary professors. Carl S. Meyer's Log Cabin to Luther Tower you will already know about, as well as Moving Frontiers, also edited by Meyer. You might also write to LCMS pastor Tom Baker in University City, Missouri (he might have moved). He has done some work on it. The only other suggestion would be personal interviews with the people involved. But I doubt that many of them would be ready to talk to you at this time. You could ask Prof. Moriarity from Ann Arbor for other suggestions. Anything more I would say would really only be hear-say.

Must hurry now. May you have a blessed Lent for Jesus' sake. It is my prayer that the conservatives in LCMS will soon be leaving and that doctrinal unanimity with WELS may be found--truly returning to the teachings found in the Brief Statement. But that means that WELS would have to give up the J.P. Koehler doctrinal innovations on church and ministry. Sorry to harp on that issue--but it is in everyone's best interests to have it settled.

Yours in Christ,



John M. Drickamer

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N ^
Mequon, WI 53092
March 9, 1986

Rev. A. T. Kretzmann
2182 N. 57th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208

Dear Pastor Kretzmann:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, I am writing my church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Since you and your congregation in Crete, Illinois were among the first to call for an investigation of the St. Louis faculty, I think it would be very valuable for me if I could interview you on this subject.

I am planning to interview Rev. Curtis Peterson of Resurrection Lutheran Church on this subject at 2:00 PM, this Thursday afternoon, March 13, 1986, May I stop in at your house around 4:00 PM on that same afternoon to interview you on my church history paper topic? I will only take a maximum of one hour of your time. If you cannot be home on Thursday afternoon, please feel free to call me at 242-2439 or 242-7202 anytime after 1:00 PM, or feel free to leave me a note at your home. Perhaps then we could arrange for another time to meet. I hope to see you Thursday afternoon around 4:00 PM.

Yours and His,



Joel Pless

March 11, 1987 ^

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. John Tietjen
1700 E. 56th Street
Chicago, IL 60637

Dear Dr. Tietjen:

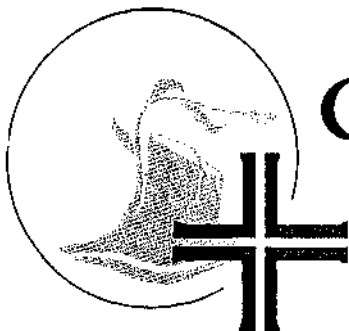
I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia, Seminary, St. Louis." In order to be fair to you and your colleagues, I am now asking you to take time out from your busy schedule and give me a brief account of how you believe the historical critical method was introduced at St. Louis.

Is it true, Dr. Tietjen, that Drs. Alfred Fuerbringer and Arthur Repp were the first ones who brought in professors who taught the historical critical method? I was told this through previous correspondence. Is it also true that you were specially chosen as president of St. Louis to continue this practice when Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer retired?

As a fellow Christian, I do not want to write anything in my church history paper that would injure your good name. All I am kindly asking you to do is to write me back using the self-addressed stamped envelope and give me what you believe is the truth about the questions I have raised, or at least direct me to some sources to find the answers. Since my paper is due the second week in April, I would appreciate a- reply within a week or two. A man of your credentials taking time out from a busy schedule to help a seminary student is greatly appreciated! May our Lenten King keep you in his care.

Yours and His,

Joel Pless



Christ Seminary Semínex

March 18, 1986

Mr. Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, Wisconsin 53092

Dear Mr. Pless:

I have received your letter and wish you God's blessings as you prepare for the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I shall be brief and direct in response to your letter. No; Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were not "the first ones who brought in professors who taught the historical critical method." During my time as a student at Concordia Seminary (1948-1953), I learned the historical critical method in the classrooms of the now sainted William Arndt, Paul Bretscher, Martin Franzmann, and George Schick. That was before Drs. Fuerbringer and Repp were in positions of leadership. No; I was not "specially chosen as president of St. Louis to continue this practice." I can't tell you why I was chosen, nor can anyone else, because the Electors who did the choosing (including the now sainted Dr. Oliver Harms and Dr. Herman Scherer) never stated their reasons. No one was more surprised than I by their choice.

To answer a question you didn't ask, I did not go to Concordia Seminary with a program of advancing the historical-critical method. I went to carry out my ordination vow to be faithful to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Yours in Christ,

John H.
Tietjen
President

5430 S. University Avenue • Chicago, IL 60615 • (312) 288-0800

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N ^
Mequon, WI 53092

March 11, 1986

Rev. Dr. Robert Preus
1 Coverdale Pl.
Fort Wayne, IN 46825

Dear Dr. Preus:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am a classmate and good friend of John Schmidt, Rick Hawes, and Dave Erber, from Concordia, Ann Arbor. I also graduated from Lutheran High North when Albert Wingfield was the principal there. I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation entered the classroom teaching at Concordia, St. Louis."

Through previous correspondence (with E. J. Otto, Daniel Moriarity, your brother Jack, and others) I have been informed that the beginnings of the historical critical method at St. Louis go back to the 1940's. Drs, Alfred Fuerbringer and Arthur Repp have been listed as being the two men responsible for bringing men to the St, Louis faculty who taught the historical critical method. Since you began teaching at St. Louis in 1957, can you shed any light on this situation, Dr. Preus?

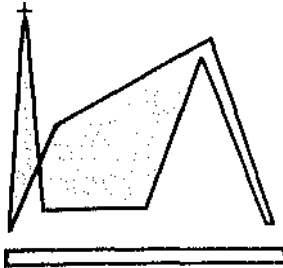
What I am asking you to do is to use the self-addressed stamped envelope and write back to me and tell me about your personal experiences about when you realized some of your colleagues on the St. Louis faculty were teaching the historical critical method. I know you are a very busy man, so please write back when you have the time. Since my paper is due in the middle of April, I would appreciate a reply in about two weeks. A man of your credentials taking time out to help a seminary student with his studies is greatly appreciated. May our Lenten King keep you and yours in his care.

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel Pless

Joel Pless

P. S. Your friend and former student, Rev. Curtis Peterson, sends you his cordial greetings. The Lord is richly blessing him in his new ministry at Resurrection Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Office of the President
April 2, 1986

Concordia Theological Seminary

6600 N. Clinton St. / Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825-4996 / (219) 482-9611

Mr. Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle, 117 N.
Mequon, WI 53092

Dear Mr. Pless:

Please forgive me for not answering your letter sooner. I had your envelope at home and your letter here at the office, and I never got them together until yesterday. I hope this answer will not come too late for you.

As one who was at the St. Louis seminary from 1957 until 1974, during which time the historical-critical method was brought into the seminary, I think I can answer your question with a good deal of authority, probably as much as anyone alive.

First of all, both Fuerbringer and Repp had nothing to do with actually promoting the historical-critical method. Neither was an exegete and neither read enough in that area to know even what the historical-critical method was. But Fuerbringer, in order to build up the school, as he thought, and Repp because he was a bit liberal in his openness to all kinds of new exegetical "insights," did promote professors who did teach the method. The first meeting I ever attended among the faculty was the fall retreat in 1957. It was at that meeting that Martin Scharlemann stood up before the entire faculty and declared that the Bible, which is true, "contains errors." The reaction from men like Franzmann, Roehrs, Spitz, J.T. Miller, Merckens, and many, many others was almost violent. He was rejected out-of-hand and the younger liberal men who were already there, like Krentz, sat sedately quiet during the discussion. But Scharlemann was undaunted and went on and on with exploratory articles, taking his cue from the historical critiques, but never actually endorsing the method or even talking much about it. It was his colleagues at the time, Krentz, Fred Danker, and then later Klein and Ehlen and Smith and Casey Jones, and many others in the exegetical and other departments, including Sauer and Wegner (Wisconsin men) who endorsed the method and brought it into full use at the seminary. Scharlemann saw what was happening, drew back, and even repudiated his colleagues in a most forthright way, totally typical of his approach to all issues. The method being totally endorsed and put in action by the exegetical department was then defended by the faculty as such, except for four or five of us including Scharlemann and four men in

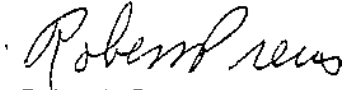
Mr. Joel Pless
April 2, 1986
Page 2

the Systematics department (Bohlmann was not around much in those days). We who opposed the method were hopelessly outnumbered and had rather little effect upon the students in terms of numbers. However, we had a very profound effect upon some of the students who are now teaching at this seminary and who are out in the field. I am sure a good half of the students never knew what the historical-critical method was, because they were deliberately never told anything about what it is by their professors. The method was merely extolled and the results of the method were the "assured results of modern scholarship."

About 1974 Scharlemann, I, and others wrote a special issue of Affirm which I will try to get hold of and send to you. These are the arguments we made against the method, specifically against those in our circles who were employing it. These articles will tell you exactly how the method was adopted and defended and regarded by the more liberal colleagues. Everyone of these more liberal colleagues is now out of the Missouri Synod.

Please give my regards to the Rev. Curtis Peterson. He is a great friend of mine.

Sincerely yours, in Christ,



Robert Preus
President

RP :dm

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N ^
Mequon, WI 53092

March 11, 1986

Rev. Herman Otten
c/o Christian News
Box 168
New Haven, MO 63068

Dear Rev. Otten:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence, I have been informed that Arthur Repp and Alfred Fuerbringer were the instigators in calling men to the St. Louis faculty who were proponents of the H-C method, and that Jaroslav Pelikan and Martin Scharlemann were the first professors to begin teaching the H-C method at St. Louis. Is this true Rev. Otten? You certainly would be in a position to know. The very existence of your newspaper proves that!

What I am asking YOU to do is to perhaps xerox some of your classnotes and/or other papers which show who was teaching the historical critical method at St. Louis when you were a student. Since I am ordering a Beck Bible, you can include the enclosures in the same package with the Bible. I think that is legal. Any of your own personal comments about the whole "H-C method situation" at St. Louis would be greatly appreciated, I am sending along \$15.00 for the AAT and the photocopies. Keep anything that is left over as my gift.

My church history professor, Prof. Martin Westerhaus, told us in class that you and Christian News are the modern day equivalents of Ernest Hengstenberg and his Evangelische Kirchenzeitung. I and my parents have been avid readers of Christian News for years. We were LCMS but now we are WELS. We have fitted in so well in the Wisconsin Synod that it is now hard to believe we were ever Missouri Synod in the first place!

We have three former LCMS pastors at Mequon right now who are taking third quarter classes with the seniors. They are all doing fine. Rev. Curtis Peterson was my evangelism field work supervisor last fall. I made a courtesy call on him last week. He is doing just fine, but his large congregation keeps him busy.

We at the Mequon seminary do not always like what we read in CN, but believe me, Rev. Otten, we always read it! Every Monday, after Isaiah II class, I race downstairs to the mailroom to read my copy of CN. Keep publishing your paper, Rev. Otten. If you don't expose the brazen apostasy in the LCMS, who will? I promise when I get my call, I'll always pay for my subscription of CN. Call Day for us is May 20, graduation is May 30. I'll let you know where I get sent.

Since ray church history paper is due the second week in April, I would appreciate a reply ASAP. I know you are very "busy, especially during Lent. I hope I can have the privilege of meeting you and your fine family in person someday, you taking time out to help a WELS sem student is appreciated!

Yours and His, in the spirit of
the old Synodical Conference,

Joel Pless

Enclosures

P. S. Please consider this personal correspondence between me and you, and not a letter for the CN "Forum."

Dear Mr. Pless:

Many thanks for your letter of March 11.

The sections on Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Seminex, ELIM, LCMS in the Christian News Encyclopedia should give you plenty of information. Also check our Christian Handbook on Vital Issues and the News & Views series on "What is Troubling The Lutherans?" published by the Church League of America. Also The books of Documentation published by The State of the Church Conference. These contain some of the controversial essays. They were published in 1960 and 61 They should be in your library at the sem.

Another source of information would be the back issues of CN. I assume they are in your sem library.

God's richest blessings,

(Herman Otten)

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N ^
Mequon, WI 53092

March 19, 1986

Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer
4125 Quail Drive
Norman, OK 73072

Dear Dr. Fuerbringer:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence, I have been told third hand that you and Dr. Arthur Repp were the two men responsible for bringing professors to St. Louis who subscribed to the historical critical method. Now out of respect for the Eighth Commandment and as a fellow Christian, I am now writing you Dr. Fuerbringer, and am asking you if what I have been told is true.

What I am kindly asking you to do is write me back, using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope and tell me as you see it your role concerning the historical critical method at St. Louis. You must be over eighty years old now, so please write at your convenience. I would, however, appreciate a reply by April 7, since my paper is due soon after that. You taking time out from your retirement to help a seminary student is greatly appreciated. May our Lenten King keep you in his care.

Yours and His


Joel Pless

PARTNERS IN MISSION

Rev A O Fuerbringer [^]
4125 Quail Dr Norman OK 73072

31 March 1986

Mr J Pless
Mequon WI

Dear Mr. Pless:
Christ is risen! Hallelujah!

Herewith I acknowledge receipt of your cordial letter of 19 March. I appreciate "both what you said and how you said it and am happy to respond to your inquiry because it gives me the opportunity to reflect on the question after 17 years of retirement and to clarify for myself and others what 'the situation was as far as I was able to perceive it. I must, however ask you to excuse whatever faux pas I may make in typing. It's unpredictable.

To begin with, the term "historical critical method" needs definition because it means different things, depending on the orientation of the user. The Lutheran Cyclopedia of 1975 says (P. 384): "Historical Method (Historical Criticism). Term used to designate a variety of methods using historical; research in interpreting a document." In its article on Higher Criticism the 1954 edition of the cyclopedia says: "Higher criticism has been and may be pursued legitimately" although it admits that unfortunately the majority of higher critics comes up with negative results. (P. 466).

Dr. Robert Smith (formerly of Concordia Seminary, now of Pacific Lutheran School of Theology) when explaining that historical critical methodology is a tool for Biblical Interpretation and can be used both negatively and positively, compared it to a hammer that can be utilized for beneficial purposes like building a house but can also be used destructively, e.g., to kill a person by hitting him over the head. One doesn't condemn the tool for what the user does with it.

In your exegetical courses you were introduced to textual criticism, I am sure. The judgment, e.g., that some of the words found in the textus receptus of the New Testament Greek were not a part of the original (cf. 1 John 5, 7.8.) is one form of historical criticism, based on the historical and comparative study of the various manuscripts.

Also, the judgement that some books belong to the Biblical canon and others do not (e.g., the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha) is a critical conclusion based on historical evidence. And the same is

Committee for Mission  Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches

true with regard to the text, authorship, time of composition etc. of individual Biblical books. Although the Holy Scriptures give answers to some of these questions they do so nowhere near to all.

My father, Ludwig Fuerbringer, who was a well-known and respected teacher at Concordia Seminary for over half a century (1893-1947), in his Introduction to the Old Testament (1925) has the following statements concerning the Pentateuch: "This does not imply that Moses wrote the whole work singlehanded" (P. 20); and "he undoubtedly utilized both the oral tradition authenticated by the great age of the forefathers and patriarchs and the then existing writings (ibid); also, "he likewise, no doubt, availed himself of assistants from among the priests, Levites and elders, particularly in writing the laws" (P. 21); furthermore, "Deut. 32 - 34 and perhaps also 31, 24 - 30 are to be regarded as appendages to the book" (P. 19). The English version of his Introduction was a translation of the original German text which appeared, I believe, in 1912. So, while my father held in the main to Moses's authorship of the books ascribed to him, since the early years of the century (when Franz Pieper was seminary president) father opted for oral tradition, pre-existing documents, contemporary writers and post-Mosaic materials in the Pentateuch, all this without explicit Biblical statements to support these views. They were historical critical judgments, conservatively used.

Your synod's August Pieper in his Jesaias II (which I unfortunately can't quote exactly because my copy was lost in a flood a few years ago) speaks of Postmosaica in the Pentateuch and, if my memory does not deceive me (though I may be going out on a limb) says that Is. 36 - 39 were not penned by that prophet. With regard to Ch. 40 - 66 he held that they undoubtedly were written by the Isaiah of Ch. 1-35, but if that were not the case they nevertheless were authored by a called and inspired prophet. Again, if this is correct, historical critical judgments, conservatively used. The book appeared, I think, in the 1920's.

So what has all this to do with the time of my presidency of Concordia Seminary (1953 - 1969)? My father and his contemporaries attended no universities or divinity schools, basing their teaching on reading and independent study. But their younger colleagues began to study elsewhere (Walter A. Maier at Harvard; Wm. Arndt at Washington/St. Louis; etc.) The latter were also quite conservative but did expand somewhat on the historical critical judgments of their seniors (e. g., Arndt with regard to Ephesians). When some of the next generation of students studied, in greater numbers and at more universities including some in Europe, they discovered that among the exponents of historical criticism there was a goodly number of sincere Bible-believing Christians much of Whose methodology could be adopted. Those in this group of Concordia graduate?, plus a few Wisconsin Synod men, who were called to the seminary during my administration were all examined in my presence by a committee consisting

of the president of the synod, the president of the district, a member of the synod's board for higher education and members of the seminary board. All were found to be in agreement with the doctrinal paragraph of the synod's constitution. Where they differed in matters of interpretation from the more traditional viewpoints they were asked to consult with their older colleagues. I regret that later some of them went off the deep end, as it were, and failed to use the proper amount of moderation, patience and sound pedagogical judgment in dealing with others, especially some very conservative students, clergy and laity. Some of the latter began to use unbrotherly tactics over against some of the professors and so a controversy began and became quite heated. I don't claim to be without fault in all of this, but I maintained then and have since that during my presidency as far as I could find out none of the faculty members denied the truth and reliability of any part of the Holy Scriptures / or taught contrary to the Lutheran confessions. Of course I did not agree with all of the conclusions reached in matters of interpretation or historical criticism.

Since then a number of the men have published some very fine books of which I shall mention only one, Robert Smith's The Easter Gospels. This is a good illustration of his very helpful use of the method to set forth the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This may not be exactly what you had in mind, but I believe it necessary in order to get the full picture. Now, I'll appreciate your response. I'm tempted to ask whether I might read a copy of your paper but I realize that that may not be possible.

I wish you a blessed Easter season, a successful completion of your studies and a fruitful and rewarding ministry.

Yours in Christ, (Alfred O. Fuerbringer signature)


Alfred O. Fuerbringer

March 19, 1986 ^

6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dr. Arthur Repp
7531 Warner
St. Louis, MO 63117

Dear Dr. Repp:

I am a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. I am writing my senior church history paper on "How the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation was introduced to the classroom teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." Through previous correspondence, I have been told third hand, that you, Dr. Repp, was the man primarily responsible for bringing professors to St. Louis who subscribed to the historical-critical method. Now out of respect for the Eighth Commandment and as a fellow Christian, I am now writing you Dr. Repp and asking you if what I have been told is true.

What I am kindly asking you to do is write me back, using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope and tell me briefly as you see it your role concerning the historical critical method at St. Louis, You must be over eighty years old now, so please write at your convenience. I would, however, appreciate a reply by April 7, since my paper is due soon after that. You taking time out from your retirement to help a seminary student is greatly appreciated. May our Lenten King keep you in his care.

Yours and His,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joel Pless".

Joel Pless

March 22, 1986

Mr. Joel Pless
6717 W. Wartburg Circle 117 N
Mequon, WI 53092

Dear Brother Joel,

Thank you for your letter of March 19 and your concern for God's will in accord with the 8th Commandment, a sometimes rare concern in church controversies.

I was academic dean at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from 1952 to 1972 and as such had the responsibility of recommending new faculty members to the president and from there to an electoral board who made the final choice.

Since the "historical-critical method" is defined in a variety of ways, I must assume that you define it in a manner contrary to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

One of the criteria for recommending a candidate to the faculty was his loyalty to the Confessions. I must say emphatically that no one I suggested was guilty of denying the basic tenets of the Holy Scriptures and at no time, to my knowledge, taught the historical critical method in a manner contrary to the Confessions.

Unfortunately some of the "conservative" Lutherans teach the Bible without realizing that God was often speaking to people in terms they could understand, e.g. the universe. If he had spoken of the universe in accord with today's concept they would not have understood what he was saying. Literalism often destroys the message and that is not orthodoxy.

Thank you for your concern for the truth and may you ever be a loyal Lutheran pastor upon graduation.

Sincerely in His Name.



Arthur. C. Repp

Dr. Arthur C. Repp
7531 Warner
St. Louis MO 63117